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SELECT NOTES
ON THE
INTERNATIONAL
SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS
FOR 1878.

Explanatory, Illustrative, and Practical.

**WITH FOUR MAPS, A CHRONOLOGICAL CHART, AND TABLE OF THE
SIGNIFICATION AND PRONUNCIATION OF PROPER NAMES.**

BY

REV. F. N. AND M. A. PELOUBET.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY HENRY HOYT, 9 CORNHILL.



THE LESSONS FOR 1878

PREFACE.

THE LESSONS for 1878 are selected by the International Committee from four books of the Bible; but most of those in the Old Testament are from that portion of the Scripture on which is the least help from ordinary commentaries.

It has been necessary to derive much of the information from other books not so easily accessible to the ordinary reader, some of which are referred to on the ninth page.

The object of this fourth series of Select Notes is the same as it has been from the first: (1) to learn the exact meaning of God's word; (2) to aid in making it vivid and impressive by facts and illustrations; and (3), and chief, to bring its truths to bear on the heart and life.

1. Even greater care and toil have been expended on this volume than on the former ones. Labor and expense have not been spared to obtain help from every possible source, and to make it as perfect an aid as possible to both teachers and scholars.

2. A short summary of time, place, rulers, and often of contemporary writers and prophets, and various circumstances, is given at the head of each lesson.

3. The matter is set forth distinctly under separate headings, — The Connection, Explanatory, Illustrative, and Practical.

4. These notes are not sectarian.

5. They include the lessons for the whole year.

6. There are four maps, — two of Palestine at different eras, one of Jerusalem and vicinity, and one of Assyria and Chaldaea.

7. A chronological chart of the kings of Judah and Israel, together with the contemporaneous prophets.

8. Parallel passages and references are taken from the Bagster Bible.

9. A table of the pronunciation and meaning of the Scripture and proper names occurring in the notes.

10. A larger volume, at the same moderate cost, so as to be within the reach of the largest number.

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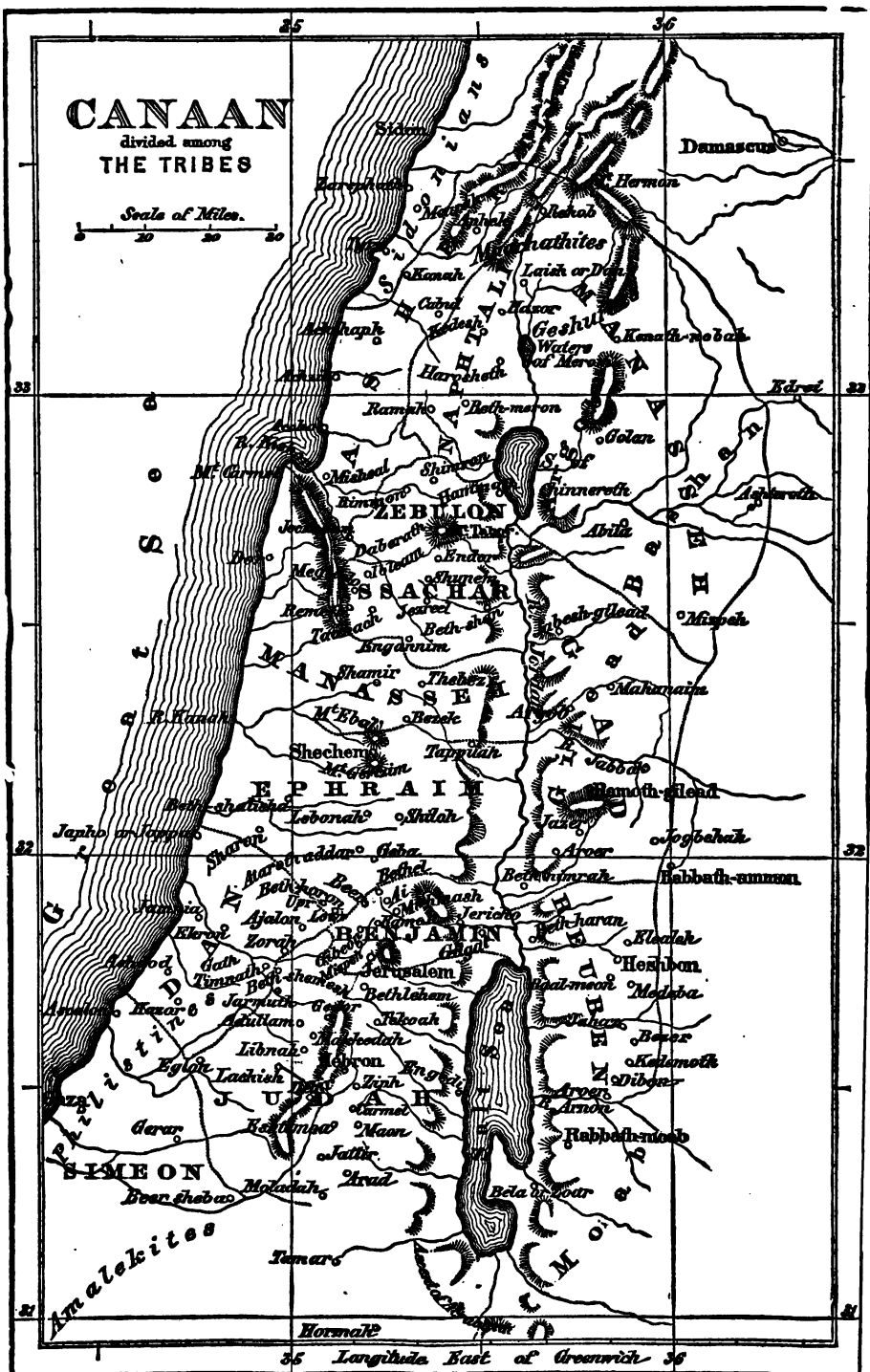
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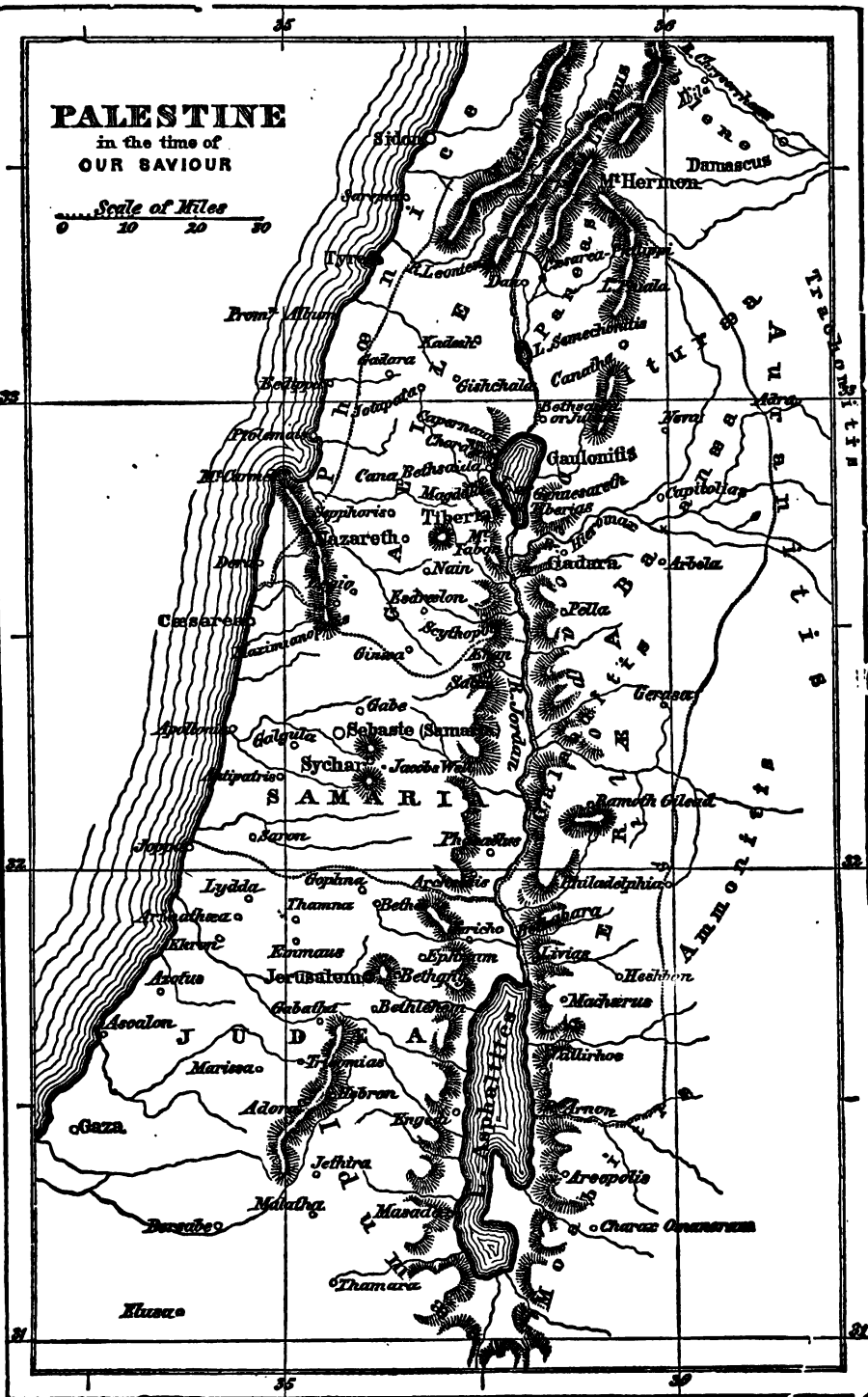
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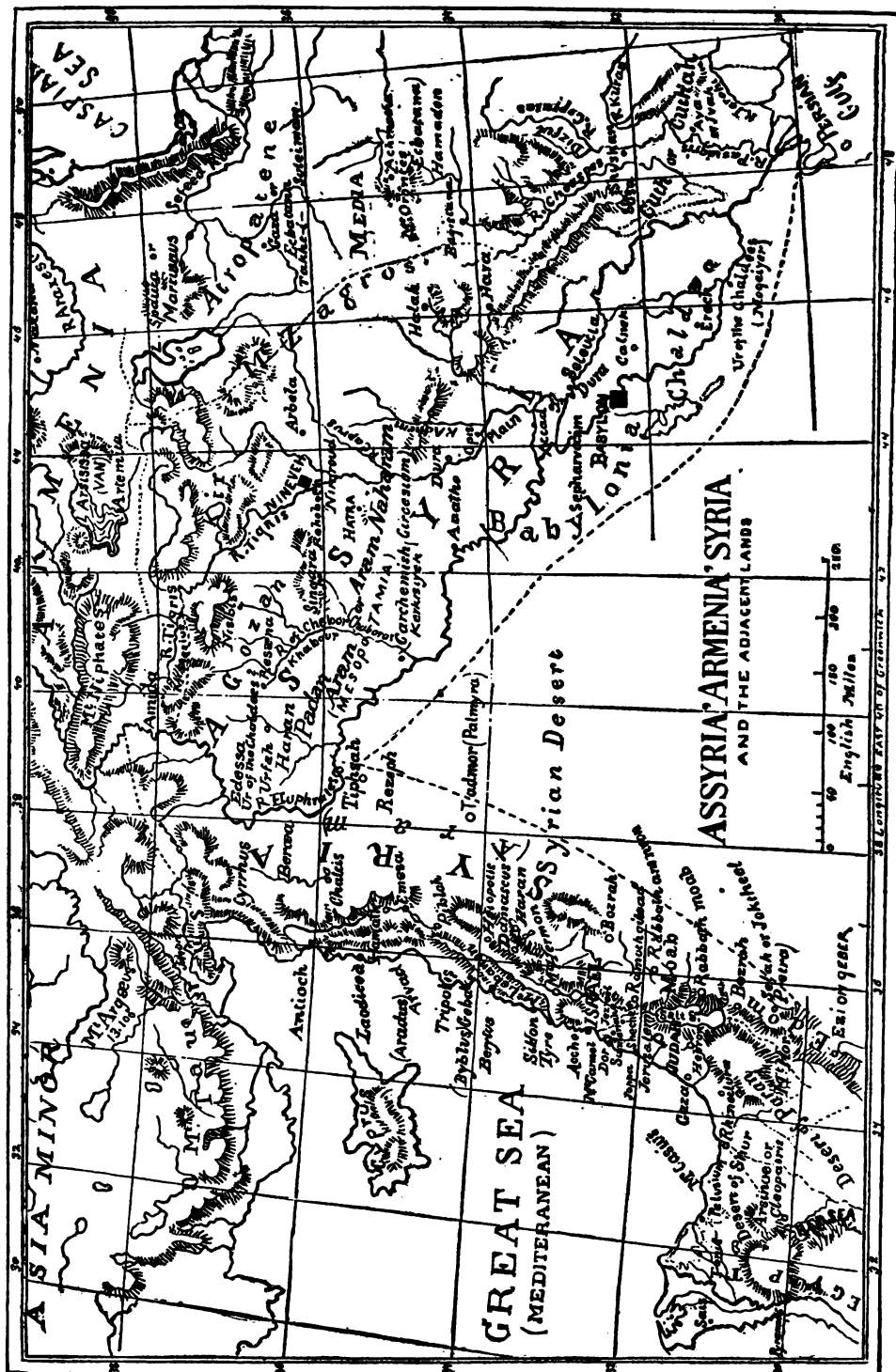
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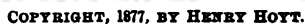
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IN THE

1st Wall built by David etc.
2nd Wall Hezekiah . . .
3rd Wall . . . Herod Agrippa AD 40



| 975 | | Kings of Judah. | Prophets. | Kings of Israel. | Outside Nations. |
|-----|----|------------------|------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 57 | 55 | Rehoboam, 27 yrs | | Jerobam, 22 yrs | |
| | | Abijah, 3. | | NAHAB, 2. | |
| | | Asa, 41. | | BAASHA, 24. | |
| 14 | | Jehoshaphat, 25 | Elijah, 18 | Elaah, 2; Zimri, 7 | |
| 83 | 85 | Jehoram, 8. | Elisha, 38 | Omri, 2; Tibni. | |
| | | Athaliah, 6. | | Ahab, 22. | |
| | | JOASH, 40. | | AMAZIAH, 2 | |
| 39 | | Amaziah, 29. | | JEHORAM, 12 | |
| 10 | | Uzziah, 52. | | JEHU, 28. | |
| 58 | | Jotham, 16. | | JEHOAHASH, 17 | |
| 42 | | Ahaz, 18. | | JEHOASH, 16 | |
| 26 | | HEZEKIAH, 29. | | JEROBOAM, 41 | |
| 98 | | Manasseh, 55. | | | |
| 42 | | Amon, 2. | | | |
| 33 | | Josiah, 31. | | | |
| 8 | | Jehoahaz, 3 mo | | | |
| | | Jehoiakim, 11. | | | |
| 97 | | Jehoiachin, 3 mo | | | |
| 86 | | ZEDEKIAH, 11. | | | |
| | | Captivity, 70. | | | |
| 36 | | Return, 40. | | | |

SOME SPECIAL HELPS.

As the lessons of this year are from some of the most difficult portions of the Bible, and take up some of the most difficult questions, and cover the period when the early monuments and records of the nations begin to throw light upon the Bible accounts, a few books are named which will aid in a further study than is possible in the limited space allowed to these Notes.

STANLEY'S JEWISH CHURCH, VOLS. II. AND III.

WILLIAM SMITH'S STUDENT'S OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.

WILLIAM SMITH'S STUDENT'S NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY.

WILLIAM SMITH'S ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE EAST.

RAWLINSON'S FIVE ANCIENT MONARCHIES.

RAWLINSON'S HERODOTUS.

RAWLINSON'S HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

RAWLINSON'S HISTORICAL EVIDENCES.

COWLES'S JEWISH HISTORY.

COWLES ON JEREMIAH AND DANIEL.

BARNES'S, COOK'S, AND LANGE'S NOTES ON DANIEL.

CUMMING'S LECTURES ON DANIEL.

ALFORD'S NEW TESTAMENT FOR ENGLISH READERS.

FARRAR'S LIFE OF CHRIST.

TRENCH ON THE PARABLES AND MIRACLES.

ROBINSON'S HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS.

MONDAY CLUB SERMONS, 1878. Published by H. HOYT.

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FIRST QUARTER.

LESSON I. — JANUARY 6, 1878.

REHOBAM, FIRST KING OF JUDAH. — 2 CHRON. 12: 1-12.

TIME. Rehoboam reigned 17 years from B. C. 975-958. The invasion of Egypt in this lesson occurred in his fifth year, B. C. 971, 218 years before the founding of Rome.

PLACE. The kingdom of Judah; chiefly in and around Jerusalem.

RULERS. Rehoboam, king of Judah; Jeroboam, of Israel; Shishak (Sheshonk I.), of Egypt.

THE BOOK OF CHRONICLES.

In the Hebrew canon the Chronicles form a single book, entitled, "Book of the Events of the Times." It begins with Adam, and ends abruptly in the middle of Cyrus's decree of restoration. The continuation of the narrative is found in the book of Ezra, which begins by repeating 2 Chron. 36: 22, 23, and filling up the fragment of the decree of Cyrus. A closer examination leads to the conclusion that Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, were originally one work, displaying throughout the peculiarities and language of a single editor. The color of the language stamps the work as one of the latest in the Old Testament. — *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

The author of the book of Chronicles traverses the ground already trodden by others. What induced him to re-write so large a portion of his country's history? The people have lately returned from captivity, and have rebuilt the temple, but they have not gathered up the threads of the old national life broken by the captivity. They require to be reminded of their entire history. They have then to be reminded more especially of their own past as an organized nation. Such a picture of the past, written in the idiom of the day, with frequent allusions to recent events, with a constant reiteration of the moral intended to be taught, was calculated to affect the newly-returned and still unsettled people far more strongly and deeply than the old narratives written without reference to the existing state of things. The Jewish writers generally ascribe the composition of Chronicles to Ezra. It was probably written B. C. 450-435. — *Canon Cook*.

KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

The kingdom of Judah lasted 388 years, B. C. 975-587. The history of the kingdom of Judah is the history of a dynasty, rather than of a nation, — of a city, rather than of a country. Its title reveals to us its strength as well as its weakness. The tribe of Judah, the city of Jerusalem, the family of David, had acquired too much fame during the preceding reigns to be easily lost. It is a striking instance of the influence of a great name on the course of human history. The lamp or torch of David was always burning, although it seemed at times on the verge of extinction. There was a pledge given as if by a covenant of salt, that the house of David should never perish (2 Chron. 13: 5).

And when, after the fall of Samaria before the Assyrian power, the little kingdom of Judah remained erect, it gathered into itself the whole national spirit. From this time began that identification of a single tribe with the people at large, which is expressed in the word *Jew*. Only by an anachronism do we apply the words *Jew* and *Jewish* to times before the overthrow of Samaria. The very smallness of the kingdom acted as a stimulus to its internal independence and strength. Again and again the fewness of the people and the narrowness of its territory are contrasted with the vigor of its moral strength and the width of its spiritual dominion. — *Stanley*.

THE CONNECTION.

We return now to the same date as our lessons of last year. The kingdom was divided; and then we traced the kingdom of Israel to its end. This year, starting also with Rehoboam, we trace the parallel progress of the kingdom of Judah. It will be well to read over the circumstances

1 And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established¹ the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he² forsook³ the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.

2 And it came to pass, *that* in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD.

¹ ch. 11: 17. ² 1 Kings 14: 22. ³ Deut. 32: 15, 18.

of the division of Solomon's kingdom (1 Kings 12), and all through these lessons keep in mind the events that are occurring at the same time in Israel, as we studied them in 1877.

It is necessary first briefly to trace the steps by which the kingdom was raised from the state to which it had been reduced by the loss of its external dominions. Rehoboam "dwelt himself" in Jerusalem. Unlike the northern kings who immediately began to shift their capital, he perceived the immense importance of retaining his hold on the city of David. This central fortress he surrounded with a chain of fortresses; in part carrying out the designs of his father, but in part increasing their number, and providing them with garrisons, arms, and provisions. These garrisoned cities, in which he placed those princes of his house whom he did not intend for the succession, were not, as might have been at first sight expected, on the northern frontier against the rival kingdom, but on the southern and western side of Jerusalem. The reason for this soon became apparent. The great Egyptian monarchy was now not allied with the house of Solomon, but with the house of Jeroboam. And now, for the first time since the exodus, Judah was once more threatened with an Egyptian bondage. — *Stanley*.

After the revolt Rehoboam set himself to building and fortifying cities (2 Chron. 11: 5-10); and the priests and Levites came to him from all Israel; and besides these, all who sought the Lord and were unwilling to forego the national worship of their fathers' God at Jerusalem. These classes were the best elements of the nation's strength, and added greatly to the resources and stability of Rehoboam's kingdom. Particularly it is said "they made him strong three years; for three years they walked in the ways of David and Solomon." — *Coxe*.

EXPLANATORY.

1. **Rehoboam.** The only son of Solomon, so far as appears in history; although two daughters are mentioned in 1 Kings 4: 11-15. His mother was Naamah, an Ammonite princess, which fact is twice stated, as no doubt giving the reason for the character of her son. She probably was one of those who seduced Solomon into idolatry. Rehoboam means "the enlarger of his people;" but a name of opposite meaning would have been given, had he been named after he began to reign. He began to reign when 41 years old, and reigned 17 years. Established the kingdom. By fortifying his capital and 15 walled cities, ch. 11: 5-12; and by welcoming the true priests and best people driven from the kingdom of Israel by Jeroboam. Ch. 11: 13-17. This continued 3 years. **Forsook the law.** Security and ease led to religious decline, which in the fourth year ended in open apostasy. The example of the court was speedily followed by his subjects; for "all Israel was with him," i.e., the people in his own kingdom. The very next year, viz., the fifth of his reign, punishment was inflicted by the invasion of Shishak. — *J. F. and B.* The apostasy of Rehoboam and his people consisted in setting up high places, images, groves, and in their encouragement of Sodomites and other Gentile abominations. 1 Kings 14: 23, 24. — *Cook.* All Israel. All the Israelites in his two tribes. The people of Judah were not called Jews till after the return from captivity. All of both kingdoms were Israelites.

2. **Shishak.** The Sheshonk I. of the monuments, first sovereign of the Bulastic, or twenty-second dynasty of Egypt. The monuments confirm the chronology of the Bible. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary.* He was the old friend and supposed father-in-law of Jeroboam. Early in the present century, during the exploration of Egyptian ruins which commenced with Napoleon's occupation of the country, the monumental record of the identical invasion of Palestine by Shishak was discovered, sculptured upon the walls of the great temple of Karnak. "It was a list of the countries, cities, and tribes conquered or ruled by him, or tributary to him." This list as copied in *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (Shishak) runs up to 133, of which No. 29 was at first read and believed to be *the kingdom of Judah*. Subsequent studies of the hieroglyphic alphabet have created a measure of doubt as to the correctness of this rendering of the name. But these doubts can in no wise weaken the evidence that this inscription gives the monumental history of this very invasion by Shishak. A large number of the cities of Palestine are unquestionably identified. Egyptologists were at first surprised to find many cities on this list that were known to be located within the ten tribes, and therefore were assumed to belong to Jeroboam. How, it was asked, is this, that

3 With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people *were* without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubim,¹ the Sukkiim, and the Ethiopians.

4 And he took the fenced cities which *pertained* to Judah; and came to Jerusalem.

5 ¶ Then came Shemaiah² the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were gath-

¹ ch. 16: 8. ² ch. 11: 2.

Shishak assaults and captures the cities of his old friend? At length Dr. Brugsch noticed that these were all cities either of the Levites or of the old Canaanites,—the former in well-known sympathy with Rehoboam, and the latter perhaps had not yet given in their allegiance to Jeroboam. What had before seemed inexplicable now became clear. Shishak was fulfilling the double purpose, first, of fattening his army on the pillage of cities, and, second, of bringing those cities into subjection to Jeroboam.—*Cowles's Hebrew History*. Against Jerusalem. Our own house here, in this "wicked London," is safe, though defenceless, and with small protection of bolts and bars, because there is little in it to tempt the spoiler; whereas the great house of the old lady in Threadneedle Street is never deemed to be safe without a company of dreadful bearskin-capped grenadiers within its walls, because of the great riches it contains. Now, we should not be over-glad to have all that gold down in our own cellars, without the grenadiers also to keep guard over it. What a perilous life it would be to have it without adequate means of protecting it! This was the case of Rehoboam. The immense treasures in gold which the temple and palace contained—the accumulations of David and Solomon—were known far and wide, and were such as required a strong power to protect from the neighboring princes. Such power Solomon had possessed; and, grievously as the strength which Rehoboam inherited from him had been impaired, it was still sufficient, under the judicious measures which had in the early years of his reign been adopted for putting the country in a state of defence, to withstand any attempt of the small neighboring states. There was, however, in the distance a more powerful and dangerous enemy, not to be restrained by any such considerations, and who had for some time beheld with longing eyes the treasures of the sacred city. This was the king of Egypt. As long as Rehoboam continued in a right course, this powerful prince was restrained by the Lord from the measures he contemplated; but no sooner had the king, with his people, sinned against Jehovah, than the hands of the Egyptian monarch were loosened, and he proceeded to invade the land with a mighty host levied from the different African territories subject to his sceptre.—*Kitto*. Because they transgressed. This was not the motive in the mind of Shishak, but the reason why God permitted the invasion. It also naturally weakened them, and made them an easier prey.

3. Twelve hundred chariots. This was not an unusual number. At the exodus, the Egyptian monarch pursued the Israelites with 600 chosen chariots, and a number of ordinary ones. Benhadad brought 1,200 chariots against Shalmaneser, and Ahab had at the same time a force of 2,000 chariots. The chariots of Solomon were 1,400.—*Cook*. Without number. A vast unnumbered horde on foot, probably only partially organized into an army that could be numbered. Lubim. Libyans, a nation on the African coast west of Egypt, and on the northern confines of the great desert. They seem to have been first reduced by the Egyptians, about B.C. 1250.—*Smith's Bible Dictionary*. Sukkiim. "Tent-dwellers," an Arab tribe dwelling in the deserts south of Palestine. Others believe them to be the Troglodytes, or "cave-dwellers," inhabiting the caverns of a mountain range on the coast of the Red Sea. Ethiopians. "Dark-complexioned." They occupied the country south of Egypt, extending over modern Nubia, Sennaar, and Northern Abyssinia. They were a dark-complexioned, stalwart race, "men of stature," and fine looking.—*Smith's Bible Dictionary*. Fenced cities. The walled cities which Rehoboam had fortified as a line of defence on his southern border. Ch. 11: 5-12.

5. Shemaiah (Jehovah hears). A prophet who appears only twice: once when Rehoboam had assembled his army of 180,000 to conquer the ten tribes who had just rebelled, he brought word from God that he must not go on; the other appearance was that described in this lesson. Nothing further is known of him. Princes of Judah. His chief or principal men. None of them were princes in the ordinary acceptation of the word.—*A. Clarke*. Because of Shishak. They had been defeated by the Egyptian army, and had retired to Jerusalem for the purpose of defending the capital.—*Kail*. Ye have forsaken me. (See on verse 2.) The conquest was rendered all the easier in consequence of Rehoboam, yielding to the influence of his Ammonitish mother, having exceeded his father in the license allowed to idolatry, so that the corrupting tendencies of the

ered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye¹ have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.

6 Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled² themselves; and they said, The³ LORD is righteous.

7 And⁴ when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; therefore⁵ I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliver-

ance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.

8 Nevertheless they shall be his⁶ servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms⁷ of the countries.

9 So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which⁸ Solomon had made.

¹ ch. 15: 2. ² Jer. 13: 15, 18. ³ Ex. 9: 27. ⁴ 1 Kings 21: 28, 29. ⁵ Lev. 26: 41, 42. ⁶ Neh. 9: 36, 37; Isa. 26: 13. ⁷ Deut. 28: 47, 48. ⁸ ch. 9: 15, 16.

foreign habits thus introduced had undermined the temporal as well as the spiritual power of Judah. — E. H. Palmer.

6. **Princes of Israel.** Israel for the Israelites of Judah, as in verse 1. **Humbled themselves.** They were conscience-stricken, and acted exactly as became them, and as was best suited to turn the Lord's anger aside. They admitted the justice of the punishment they had brought upon themselves; and they humbled themselves, and said, "The Lord is righteous," — an admission as brief and significant as the reproof. — *Kitto*.

7. **Not destroy—but some deliverance.** This humiliation was graciously received in heaven; and it was intimated that for this they should be spared some portion of the ignominy they had incurred. This seems to have meant that their lives would be spared, and that the city would not be destroyed by the Egyptian host; yet they should for a time feel that these overbearing foreigners were their masters, that they might know the difference between the service of the Lord and that of strange princes. It was probably as an act of submission to this doom, that no defence of Jerusalem was attempted; and He in whose hand is the heart of kings so mollified the stern purposes of Shishak, that he was content with the spoils of the temple and the palace, without molesting the inhabitants, or damaging the city, or attempting to retain the country in subjection. — *Kitto*.

8. **His servants.** They would be compelled to pay heavy tribute to Egypt, as well as surrender their treasures at this time. **Know my service, &c.** They may be able to contrast the light burden of the theocracy with the heavy yoke of a foreign monarch. — *Cook*. The only way they would learn the blessings of serving God, and not complain of the burdens he laid upon them, was to make trial of the burdens and bondage of wrong-doing.

9. **Treasures.** Recollecting the prodigious quantities of precious metal lavished by Solomon on these buildings, this spoil must have been amply sufficient to fulfil the greedy expectations of the invaders, and satisfy the wishes of their nation. It has indeed been urged that no such spoil could have proved an adequate return for the costs of the expedition, and that it was unlikely that its objects would be satisfied by the plunder of a palace and a temple. But it may be answered, that, under ancient military arrangements, an army was a less costly instrument than — happily for the peace of the world — it has now become. Besides, to allege that the plunder of a temple is not an adequate object of military action is against the facts of history, and is to forget that riches equal to the wealth of a nation were often in ancient times lavished upon or treasured up in temples. That the result was not inadequate to the extent and importance of the expedition, — that it was, in fact, regarded as a memorable event in Egypt, — is shown by the circumstance that the successful results of the campaign are celebrated in a series of sculptures on the north external wall of the temple at Karnak. — *Kitto*. **He took all;** i.e., every thing valuable he found. The cost of the targets and shields has been estimated at about 239,000 pounds. The shields of gold (ch. 9: 16) made by Solomon were kept in the house of the forest of Lebanon (ch. 9: 16). They seem to have been borne, like maces, by the owners or guard of the palace, when they attended the king to the temple or on other public processions. — *J. F. and B.* There were 500 of them (see 1 Kings 10: 16, 17), 200 targets or large square shields, covering the whole body. They were made of wood

10 Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed *them* to the hands of the chief¹ of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house.

11 And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and

brought them again into the guard-chamber.

12 And when² he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy *him* altogether: and also in Judah things went well.

¹ 2 Sam. 8: 18. ² ch. 33: 12, 13; Isa. 57: 15; 1 Pet. 5: 6.

overlaid with gold, each one worth 600 shekels, or 392 dollars (reckoning the shekels at their silver value). Cook makes them worth 650 to 700 pounds, or more than 3,000 dollars, using shekel as a weight, and not a coin, 219 grains Troy (which seems more correct). The 300 smaller shields were either round or oval, and made of wood or leather covered with gold. The gold was just half as much as that on the targets. They were probably used only on special occasions, more for show than for ordinary use, and served to adorn the house of the forest of Lebanon, where they were kept. Golden shields are mentioned in 1 Mac. 6: 39, and were used also by the Carthaginians. — *Condensed from Lange.*

10. Shields of brass. The recollection of the catastrophe was long preserved in the brazen substitutes with which Rehoboam poorly tried to represent the former grandeur. The bitter irony with which the sacred historian records the parade of these counterfeits may be considered as the key-note to this whole period. They well represent the "brazen shields" by which fallen churches and kingdoms have endeavored to conceal from their own and their neighbors' eyes that the golden shields of Solomon have passed away from them. — *Stanley.*

11. The king entered the house of the Lord. Notwithstanding that the king encouraged and secretly practised idolatry (1 Kings 14: 23, 24; 15: 3, 12), he maintained a public profession of faith in Jehovah, and attended in state the temple services. — *Cook.* The guard. The royal guards, named Celeres with Romulus (Livy 1: 14). They kept watch at the palace gate, and accompanied the king in solemn processions. — *Bahr.* Guard-chamber. Not exactly the "guard-room," but any place where the runners (guard) were staying. The golden shields were kept in the house of the forest of Lebanon; but it is doubtful whether these brazen shields were only kept in the guard-chamber as of no value. — *Bahr.*

12. Not destroy altogether. The subsequent reflection which led him, under divine influence, to alter his views, and to be content with the treasures of the palace and temple, may have been found in the consideration that it might not be good policy for Egypt to push its frontier in this direction, — thus destroying politically the desert barrier which separated it from other nations, — and still less to reconstruct and render once more formidable the kingdom which had been weakened by separation into two. — *Kitto.* Things went well. Judah still prospered. The margin reads, "And yet in Judah there were good things," which is probably correct. There was much true religion and piety in the land. Therefore it was prospered, and Shishak no more invaded the land.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Sin and its punishment (verse 1, 2). The consul Q. S. Cæpio had taken the city of Toulouse by an act of more than common perfidy and treachery, and possessed himself of the immense hoards of wealth stored in the temples of the Gaulish deities. From this day forth he was so hunted by calamity, all extremest evils and disasters, all shame and dishonor, fell so thick on himself and all who were his, and were so traced up by the mortal instinct of mankind to this accursed thing which he had made his own, that any-wicked gains fatal to their possessor acquired this name; and of such a one it would be said, "He has gold of Toulouse." — *Trench.*

II. Sowing and reaping. One day the master of Lukman (an Eastern fabulist) said to him, "Go into such a field, and sow barley." Lukman sowed oats instead. At the time of harvest his master went to the place, and, seeing the green oats springing up, asked him, "Did I not tell you to sow barley here? Why, then, have you sown oats?" He answered, "I sowed oats in the hope that barley would grow up." His master said, "What foolish idea is this? Have you ever heard of the like?" Lukman replied, "You yourself are constantly sowing in the field of the world the seeds of evil, and yet expect to reap in the resurrection day the fruits of virtue. Therefore I thought also I might get barley by sowing oats." The master was abashed at the reply, and set Lukman free. — *Biblical Treasury.*

III. Humbled themselves (verse 6). A man, as he goes down in self, goes up in God. It is interesting to trace this in the experience of the apostle Paul, as gathered from his Epistles. In the year of our Lord 59, he is the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because he persecuted the Church of God. In the year of our Lord 64, after four years more of growth in grace, he is "less than the least of all saints." But in the year of our Lord 65, and not long before he was to receive his crown in heaven, he is "the chief of sinners." — *Dr. Cheever.*

IV. The service of God and the service of sin (verse 8). When Cyrus the Great desired to enlist the Persian warriors to join in his plans, he assembled the army on a certain day and place, and provided each with an axe. He marched them into the forest, and made them toil all day in cutting down trees, with coarse food and little rest. The next day he brought them to a great banquet, with abundant meats and rich wines in profusion, and bid them feast and be merry. They enjoyed it all the more after the hard fare of the previous day, and joined in merry songs and tales and dances. At evening Cyrus called them together, and asked which service they liked best. Then he said to them, "If you follow me, you will enjoy ease, abundance, and luxury. If you refuse, you must toil on in privations and hardships as you do now, and so end your days." — *Condensed from Abbott's Cyrus the Great.* So must we choose the service of God or the service of sin; and like these soldiers we should receive the proposed service of God "with enthusiasm and joy."

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1. When he had established the kingdom, he forsook the law (verse 1). Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them. When men gain wealth or honor there is peculiar danger of their feeling with Nebuchadnezzar, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built?" and then their fall is nigh.

2. All Israel with him (verse 1). No man can sin to himself alone. This is one of the terrible things about sin, that the sinner drags others down with him.

3. Because they had sinned (verse 2). Not because they had been otherwise impolitic. Sin is always bad policy. Right doing is always good policy. Here is the north star by which individuals and states may steer in the stormiest seas and the darkest nights.

4. They were punished by the hands of men, but it was still under God's control. The wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder he will restrain.

5. Punishment follows sin as surely, though not always so closely, as our shadow follows us. The mills of God grind slow but sure.

6. Took fenced cities first (verse 4). Satan often takes the outposts of our character first. We sin smaller sins, we yield to lesser temptations, we indulge in less offensive forms of bad habits, and at last our souls fall into crime and hardness of heart, unless divine grace prevents us.

7. (Verse 5.) God sends ministers and teachers to warn us. Their word comes with double power when God's providence goes with the word.

8. If God simply leaves us to ourselves, we are lost.

9. Humbled themselves (verse 6). If we have humble hearts under humbling providences, the affliction has done its work, and will either be removed or the property of it altered. — *Henry.*

10. The Lord is righteous. It becomes us when under the rebukes of Providence to justify God, and judge ourselves. — *Henry.*

11. Sincere confession of sin is like the first snow-drop, a harbinger of spring, and the fruits of the Spirit.

12. (Verse 8.) The service of sin is a hard service: it is misery, wretchedness, and death, while the service of Christ is joy, peace, and love. Christ's yoke is easy, while the wages of sin is death.

13. Whatever difficulties or hardships we may imagine in the way of obedience, better, a thousand times, go through them, than expose ourselves to the punishment of disobedience. Are the laws of temperance thought hard? The effects of intemperance will be much harder. — *Henry.*

14. Took away the treasures (verse 9). Sin always takes away our treasures, all that is best and most worth having in the soul.

15. Sin quickly enfeebles and impoverishes and disgraces the most prosperous nations.

16. Brass for gold (verses 10, 11). When the real glory of a religious profession is gone, all external splendor will follow it, or become worthless. And yet many are pleased with an ostentatious imitation of the usages of better times, which have lost their value, but retain their glitter.

17. (Verse 12.) When men repent, and forsake their sins, all things will go well.

LESSON II. — JANUARY 13, 1878.

ASA FAITHFUL TO HIS GOD. — 2 CHRON. 14: 1-11.

TIME. Asa reigned 41 years, B. C. 955-914. This lesson extends over the first 15 years, 955-941. The attack of Zerah was in 941, the 14th year of Asa's reign.

PLACE. The kingdom of Judah; Mareshah in Judah.

RULERS. Asa, king of Judah; Zerah, i.e., Usarken II., fourth king of the 22d dynasty of Egypt. Six kings — Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, and Ahab — reigned in Israel during the reign of Asa in Judah.

THE CONNECTION.

Rehoboam died after a reign of 17 years, and his son Abijah reigned in his stead. He was the bad son of a bad father; but he was a brave warrior, and, during the three short years of his reign, "he did much toward recovering the ancient glory of Judah." He proposed to himself to re-establish his dominion over the ten tribes; and, backed by a military force of 400,000 chosen men, he marched into the dominion of Jeroboam, and stationed himself on Mount Zemaraim, in the mountainous region of Ephraim. Here he was met by Jeroboam, who could muster 800,000 warriors. Abijah, after the frequent manner of the East, made a haughty harangue to Jeroboam and his army. But, while he was talking, the wily Jeroboam was acting, and flanked Abijah's army with an ambush from behind. The Judahites raised a cry of dismay and a prayer to God; the priests sounded their silver trumpets; and with a shout the army of Judah rushed upon Israel, and utterly defeated them. It is said that they slew 500,000 men. Either this may refer to the whole war, which continued till the end of Abijah's reign, or it was on the principle referred to by Sir Charles Napier when he said, "Never can I forget the banks of the Fulaalee, and the bloody bed of that river, where 2,000 of our men fought 35,000 enemies, — where, for three hours, the musket and the bayonet encountered the sword and the shield in mortal combat; for on that dreadful day no man spared a foe: *we were too weak for mercy.*"

1 So¹ Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son

reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years.

2 And Asa did that which was

¹ 1 Kings 15: 8, &c.

EXPLANATORY.

1. **Abijah.** The son of Rehoboam and Maachah the grand-daughter of Absalom by his daughter Tamar, who married one Uriel of the house of Saul; 1 Kings 15: 2; 2 Chron. 13: 2. He reigned three years. **Slept.** Sleep is the beautiful name for death, containing even then the belief in immortality and the hope of resurrection. **City of David.** Jerusalem, where were the royal tombs. **Asa his son.** The good son of a bad father. His name means "a physician." He had a long and prosperous reign of 41 years. He was probably between 20 and 30 years old when he began to reign. He was conspicuous for his earnestness in supporting the worship of God, and rooting out idolatry with its attendant immoralities, and for the vigor and wisdom with which he provided for the prosperity of his kingdom. Asa's reign marks the return of Judah to a consciousness of the high destiny to which God had called her. — *Bishop George E. Cotton.* **Quiet ten years.** The first ten years of his reign. It is said in 1 Kings 15: 16, that there was war between Baasha and Asa all their days; but Baasha began to reign in the third year of Asa. It doubtless means that while there was a state of hostilities during that time, there was no general war, nothing that would disturb the actual peace of the kingdom. The quiet time when the historian has little to record is the time, both in individuals and in men, of the greatest progress and best prosperity.

2. **Asa did that which was good.** In 1 Kings 15: 14, it is said that Asa's "heart was perfect with the Lord all his days." A perfect heart in Scripture means a heart not perfect in respect of degrees, but perfect in respect of parts; an entire heart, a heart wherein no part is wholly wanting. He does not say he had done perfect actions, but yet that he walked with a perfect heart; that is, with a loyal heart before God. Though Asa failed in reformation, "and the high places were not

good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God:

3 For he took away the altars of the strange *gods*, and the high places,¹ and brake down the images, and cut² down the groves:

4 And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment.

5 Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him.

6 ¶ And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because³ the LORD had given him rest.

7 Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about *them* walls, and towers, gates, and bars, *while* the land is yet before us; because we have sought⁴ the LORD our God, we have sought *him*, and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built, and prospered.

¹ ch. 15: 17. ¹ Kings 11: 7. ² Exod. 34: 13. ³ Josh. 23: 1. ⁴ Ps. 105: 3, 4. Jer. 29: 13.

removed, nevertheless his heart was perfect," that is, loyal, "with the Lord all his days." — *Joseph Mede*. In care for the interests of religion, in promoting the temporal welfare of his people, in strengthening his kingdom by fortresses, and by organizing a large force liable to and fitted for military service, and in repairing, so far as his means allowed, the shorn magnificence of the Lord's temple and his own palace, the first ten years of Asa's reign happily passed. — *Kitto*.

3. He took away the altars. It is worthy of special notice, that although it is said of Asa by one of the sacred historians, that he "took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and broke down the images, and cut down the groves;" the other assures us that "the high places were not removed" (ch. 15: 16), although "Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days." This apparent contradiction is obviated when we observe that the high places he removed were those in which idols had been worshipped, whereas those consecrated to the Lord himself were suffered to remain. The historian obviously notes this as a shortcoming to be deplored, yet not as a wilful or doom-bringing sin. — *Kitto*. Strange gods. The idolatrous gods of foreign countries. High places. It was the custom of the Canaanites, in common with the Persians, Greeks, &c., to build altars on the tops of hills (Num. 22: 41). The Israelites naturally fell into the practice (1 Sam. 9: 12; 1 Kings 14: 23). It was forbidden by the law of Moses (Deut. 12: 11-14; Lev. 26: 30); but it did not cease, even in the kingdom of Judah, till the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 23: 8). Sometimes there was simply an altar on the hill; sometimes there was a chapel attached to it, which was usually only a tent of bright colors (Ezek. 16: 16; 2 Kings 23: 7). The term "high place" became so common that it was given to any idolatrous shrine, even in a valley (Jer. 7: 31) or in the street of a city (Ezek. 16: 31). — *Rev. J. E. Todd*. Images. The memorial stones erected to Baal. — *Lange*. Groves. The Asherim, or wooden posts and holy trees consecrated to Astarte. While the wooden monuments represented the female nature-divinity (Astarte), the stone pillars represented the male deity (Baal). — *Lange*.

4. And commanded Judah. He went so far even as to remove his grandmother Maachab from her position as the queen mother, because she had "made an idol in a grove." He not only did right himself, but he taught and trained his people to do right.

5. He took away, &c. All public objects and relics of idolatry in Jerusalem and other cities through his kingdom were destroyed; but those high places where God was worshipped under the figure of an ox, as at Beth-el, were suffered to remain (1 Kings 15: 14)). So far the reformation was incomplete. — *J. F. B.*

6. Fenced cities. Fortresses, probably most of those fortified by Rehoboam (ch. 11: 6-10). In time of peace he prepared for war which might be waged against him at any time, the true plan, if it is only done in the right way, not by large standing armies, but by fortifications, and chiefly by the education and moral and religious culture of the people. The Lord had given him rest. Even what comes to us from others, and through natural channels, is so controlled by God that "all things shall work together for good to them that love him."

7. While the land is yet before us; i.e., while we have free and undisputed progress everywhere; no foe is near; but as this happy time of peace may not last always, and the kingdom is but small and weak, let us prepare suitable defences in case of need. He had also an army of 580,000 men. Judah furnished the heavy armed soldiers, and Benjamin the archers. This large number

8 And Asa had an army of *men* that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these *were* mighty men of valor.

9 ¶ And¹ there came out against

them Zerah the Ethiopian, with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah.²

10 Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.

¹ ch. 16: 8. ² Josh. 15: 44.

does not mean a body of professional soldiers, such as compose European armies, but all capable of bearing arms, and liable to be called into service.—*J. F. and B.*

8. **Targets and spears.** The great and long shield (target) is here meant, in opposition to the short or round shield mentioned as the defence of the Benjamites. **Two hundred and eighty thousand.** With respect to the comparatively high number of 280,000 Benjamites, we are to consider not only their lighter armor, which might be borne by younger and weaker men; but also that Benjamin was an eminently warlike tribe ("a ravening wolf," according to Jacob's prophetic word), that must have taken the field with all possible force.—*Zöckler.* The total number of Asa's warriors, 580,000,—an increase of 180,000 over the armed men of his father Abijah (ch. 13: 3),—shows the prosperity and growth of the kingdom.

9. **Zerah the Ethiopian.** At length, probably in the 14th year of Asa, the anticipated danger came. It therefore occurred about the same year of Usarken II. (who is Zerah), fourth king of the 22d dynasty of Egypt, who began to reign about the same time as Asa.—*Poole.* Usarken II. may have been by birth an Ethiopian, for he was the son-in-law, not the son, of the preceding monarch, and reigned in right of his wife.—*Cook.* With an host. These were Cushim (Ethiopians) and Lubim (Libyans). As the invaders afterwards retreated by way of Gerar, and Mareshah lay on the west of the hill country of Judah, where it rises out of the Palestine plain in the line of march from Egypt to Jerusalem, it cannot be doubted that they came out of Egypt. The composition of the army of Zerah, of Cushim and Lubim (ch. 16: 8), closely resembles that of Shishak, Lubim, Sukkim, and Cushim (ch. 12: 3). Both armies had chariots and horsemen. The Cushim might have been of an Asiatic Cush, but the Lubim can only have been Africans. The army must therefore have been of a king of Egypt, or of Ethiopia above Egypt. The uncertainty is removed by our finding that the kings of the 22d dynasty employed mercenaries of a Libyan tribe. The army, moreover, as consisting partly if not wholly of a mercenary force with chariots and horsemen, is, save in the horsemen, exactly what an Egyptian army of the empire would have been.—*Reginald Stuart Poole, of the British Museum.* This is the largest collected army of which we hear in Scripture; but Darius Codomannus brought into the field at Arbela a force of 1,040,000. Xerxes crossed into Greece with above a million; and Artaxerxes Mnemon collected 1,260,000 men to meet the attack of the younger Cyrus.—*Cook.* The Libyans were, we doubt not, such and the descendants of such as had been among Shishak's levies when he invaded the land some 25 years before, and who, finding here kindred tribes, and a country and modes of life congenial to their own habits, chose to be left behind, doubtless with the glad consent of Shishak, who thus got rid of them when their work was done, without the expense and trouble of restoring them to their own land. It is, indeed, very likely that the idea of the present expedition originated with this people,—in their continual talk of the ease with which the country had been subdued in the time of Rehoboam, of the golden glories of Jerusalem, and of the rich pillage obtained there.—*Kitto.*

10. **Set the battle in array.** The Egyptian monuments enable us to picture the general disposition of Zerah's army. The chariots formed the first corps, in a single or double line; behind them, massed in phalanxes, were heavy armed troops; probably on the flanks stood archers and horsemen in lighter formations. Zerah retired from before Mareshah toward the plain, that he might use his chariots and horsemen with effect, instead of entangling them in the narrow valleys leading towards Jerusalem. From the prayer of Asa we may judge that, when he came upon the invading army, he saw its hugeness, and so that, as he descended through a valley, it lay spread out beneath him. Asa marching down a valley must have attacked in heavy column. His spearmen of Judah must have formed this column. Each bank of the valley would have been occupied by the Benjamite archers. No doubt the Ethiopian, confident in his numbers, disdained to attack the Hebrews, or clear the heights, but waited in the broad valley.—*Reginald Stuart Poole.* Zephathah at Mareshah. Mareshah means "place at the head or top," and Zephathah, "vale of

11 And Asa cried¹ unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, *it is* nothing with thee to help, whether² with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our

God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name³ we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou *art* our God; let not man prevail against thee.

¹ ch. 13: 14. Exod. 14: 10. Ps. 18: 6; 120: 1. ² 1 Sam. 14: 6. ³ 1 Sam. 17: 45. Prov. 18: 10.

the watch tower." A deep valley near the site of Maresah, running down to Belt Jibria (Eleutheropolis), and thence into the plain of Philistia. Maresah is a city in the low country of Judah, 26 miles south-west of Jerusalem. — G. H. Whitney, *Bible Geography*.

11. It is nothing with thee. It is alike to thee to help the powerful or the weak; i.e., thou canst as easily help the weak as the strong. — Cook. Let not man prevail against thee. These were the words with which King Asa, full of faith, marched against the Cushite host. Great words they are, and deserve to be well considered. Observe the root of the idea from which they spring. At the first view it might seem more obvious and natural to say, "Let not man prevail against us;" but he says, "Let not man prevail against Thee." This is a bold word. It assumes that the Lord's cause and theirs were so much identified, his honor so much involved in theirs in this matter, that man's triumph over them would be triumph over him. If this notion rested not on strong foundations, it were egregious presumption; but, if it were well founded, it was faith. — Kitto. Now, by what special agencies, the half-million men of Asa's army (verse 8), supposing them all present, drove, routed, and almost utterly annihilated this million of enemies, we are not told. It is only said that "the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled." The victorious host pursued the fleeing to Gerar, full 20 miles, and took immense spoil. The victory was most decisive; it broke the arm of Egypt's strength for a full generation. — Cowles. The defeat of Zerah is one of the most remarkable events in the history of the Jews. On no other occasion did they meet in the field, and overcome the forces of the two great monarchies between which they were placed. The results which follow are most striking. The southern power cannot rally from the blow, but rapidly declines, and for above three centuries makes no further effort in this direction. Friendly ties alone connect the two countries; and it is not till B. C. 609, that an Egyptian force again enters Palestine with a hostile intention. — Cook.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. The kingdom was quiet. Asa set the battle in array. In doing the duties of peace is the best preparation for the sterner duties of life. Before the war men said, "Heroism is dead in the North. Your young men can carry spades, but not muskets; they can jump counters, but not parapets; they can charge heavy prices, but not bayonets." But at length they taught the gazing nations that in the earnest doing, in peace, the deeds of peace, in performing quiet duties in quiet times, is found the truest preparation for the heroic deeds of war. Heroism, courage, patriotism, are as real and living and growing amid the temptations of civil life, as on the field of war. So in the church the truest preparation for bearing bravely the cross of Christ in times of persecution is to bear the cross Christ gives us day by day. They will do great things for Christ who serve him best in daily life. They will be martyrs, if called to the test, who deny themselves and serve Christ most faithfully in ordinary times. —

II. We must cast out sins if we would prosper (verses 3-5). During the summer of 1853 (writes a gentleman), I was an invalid, and was induced, on the recommendation of my physician, to go to the hydropathic establishment at Sudbrook Park, near Richmond, in Surrey. During my sojourn there, I was one day walking through the romantic grounds and park with some friends and the proprietor, Dr. Ellis, when the doctor drew our attention to a large sycamore-tree, decayed to the core. "That fine tree," said he, "was killed by a single worm." In answer to our inquiries, we found that about two years previously the tree was as healthy as any in the park, when a wood-worm, about three inches long, was observed to be forcing its way under the bark of the trunk. It caught the eye of a naturalist who was staying at the establishment; and he remarked, "Let that worm alone, doctor, and it will kill the tree." This seemed very improbable, but it was agreed that the black-headed worm should not be disturbed. After a time it was found that the worm had tunnelled its way a considerable distance under the bark. The next summer the leaves of the tree dropped off very early; and in the succeeding year it was a dead, rotten thing, and the hole made by the worm might be seen in the very heart of the once noble trunk. Let us learn a lesson from that dead tree. How many, who once promised fair for usefulness in the world and the Church, have been ruined by a single sin! — *Biblical Treasury*.

3. **Trust in God** (verse 11). Of Martin Luther it has been said, that, though generally cheerful and happy in his God, there were times when he passed through deep waters, and cried in bitterness of soul, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Once, when nothing seemed to avail, he was induced to leave home for a few days, in the hope that he might recover his cheerfulness; but he returned with a cloudy and dejected countenance. How great was his surprise, on entering the house, to find his wife seated in the middle of the room, attired in black garments, and with a mourning-cloak thrown over her, while she pressed to her eyes her handkerchief as if weeping bitterly! He eagerly inquired the cause of her distress, which she seemed loath at first to communicate; but, on his again imploring her to speak, she answered, "Only think, dear doctor, our Father in heaven is dead! Judge if I have not cause for my grief." Upon this, immediately comprehending her riddle, he laughed, and, embracing her, said, "You are right, dear Kate: I am acting as if there were no God in heaven;" and from that hour his melancholy left him. — *"Above Rubies," by Mrs. Brightwell.*

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1. **Abijah** (verse 1). If Abijah had not done what he did to quiet the land, Asa could not have done what he did to reform it. — *Henry.*

2. **Slept.** Death is called a sleep, that in the very mention of its name its terrors may be disarmed by the hope of the resurrection morning.

3. **Quiet.** Rest is not idleness, but free and joyous activity, unrestrained by outer hindrances.

4. **Asa did that which was good** (verse 2). Doing right is an essential condition of peace. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

5. Asa did not do all he ought: he left some high places; but God accepted him because his heart was right, and he sought to serve and obey him. There is a great difference between the sins of a bad heart, and the unintended errors of a good heart.

6. **Took away strange gods** (verse 3). So should we cast out all idols from our hearts, and all high places of pride.

7. He hoped by destroying the idols to reform the idolaters, rather than to ruin them. — *Henry.*

8. We should remove all occasions and open temptations to sin.

9. **Commanded Judah** (verse 4). We should use every means in our power to influence men, and instruct them in righteous ways; not only doing right, but pressing others to do right.

10. **Law and commandments.** Nothing will profit our own souls but that religion which induces us to do that which is right in the eyes of the Lord. — *Scott.*

11. **Built fenced cities** (verse 6). In times of quiet and peace from attacks of our spiritual enemies, we are to build up that character and do those works which will be our best defence against every attack of sin and Satan.

12. **Judah. Benjamin** (verse 8). Different gifts and employments are for the common good. — *Henry.*

13. Benjamin, not long ago called "little Benjamin," had strangely increased of late. God's blessing can make a little one to become a thousand. — *Henry.*

14. **A thousand thousand** (verse 9). The worldlings are vastly more in number than Christians. They seem to have greater power, but it is only seeming. It is true of our towns and villages as it is of the world as a whole, — three-fourths of the world is heathen, and one-fourth Christian; but three-fourths of the power of the world lies with the one-fourth who are in Christian nations.

15. **Set the battle** (verse 10). Asa used all the means in his power, as well as prayer. Faith and works together bring the victory.

16. **Asa's prayer** (verse 11). All the Christian's power lies in God, who never fails those who trust in him.

17. God can help us in the greatest troubles, as easily as in the least; with the smallest means, as well as with the greatest.

18. True faith gives all the glory to God.

19. We should so put ourselves on the side of God, that his cause and ours shall be one.

LESSON III.—JANUARY 20, 1878.

THE COVENANT RENEWED.—2 CHRON. 15: 8-15.

TIME. B. C. 940, about the month of May.

PLACE. Jerusalem, in the kingdom of Judah.

RULERS. Asa, king of Judah; Baasha, of Israel; Usarken II. (Zerah), of Egypt; Benhadad I. (or Tabrimmon, his father), of Syria.

THE CONNECTION.

The impulses of the wonderful victory recorded in the last lesson were wisely turned to account in promoting religious reform in Judah. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Azariah, son of Oded (this Oded being perhaps but a different form of the name Iddo), and he went forth to meet Asa, returning under the yet fresh impressions of this great deliverance. "Hear ye me," said he, "Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while ye be with him; and, if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but, if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." How briefly and yet how truthfully put! He proceeded to speak of the many seasons of religious declension occurring in their past history. In verse 3, "Now for a long season," should rather be, *at many seasons*, referring to the period of the Judges, as well as other seasons subsequent. In these declensions there was no teaching of God by priests or by the written law, and there was the greatest insecurity of life and instability of thrones. He exhorted them to be strong in faith, and full of courage and confidence in God. This must of course be understood to imply that they purge away all vestiges of idolatry, and give their heart and worship to the true God only. To this reform Asa and his people set themselves earnestly. All who had faith in Israel's God gathered together, not from Judah and Benjamin only, but "the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Samaria; for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance when they saw that the Lord his God was with him."—*Couples*.

| | |
|--|---|
| 8 And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and | put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he |
|--|---|

EXPLANATORY.

8. Asa. Third king of Judah; grandson of Rehoboam. **These words.** Reported in this chapter, verses 2-7 (see connection). **Prophecy.** Prophecy was not so much the foretelling of future events as the revealing of the will of God, speaking to the people the words which God commanded the prophet to utter. **Oded the prophet.** In verse 1, this prophecy is said to be by Azariah the son of Oded. In either of two ways may the difficulty be satisfactorily explained: (1) With Bertheau and Zochler, we may regard the words, "Oded the prophet," in verse 8, as having been copied into the text from some marginal note, by a mistake of the copyist; or (2) with Smith's Bible Dictionary, and many others, restore the words left out by mistake, "Azariah the son of," just before Oded. It reads thus in the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Vulgate.—Probably a short expression for "the prophecy of the son of Oded," although some think the father may have prophesied, as well as the son, and foretold the same calamities.—*Patrick*. **Idols out of the land of Judah.** At the beginning of his reign he removed these idols (ch. 14: 5). His early endeavors had only a partial success, and so it was requisite to make a fresh start, in order to bring the good work to completion.—*Cook*. Those with idolatrous hearts gradually brought back their idols after the first zeal of driving them out had subsided; and after several years, it being now the 15th of Asa's reign, the idolaters would have grown bolder in their idolatry. **Cities he had taken from Mount Ephraim.** According to ch. 13: 19, it appears that these were the cities that Abijah, Asa's father, had taken. No war of Asa with the northern kingdom had taken place at this time. A co-operation of Asa as joint commander with his father seems a questionable assumption, on account of his then very great youth.—*Otto Zochler*. And yet this may have been true. But practically it is the same whether Abijah, or Asa, did the deed; the "he" representing the same dynasty and the unity of the kingdom. **Mount Ephraim** is the mountainous country of the tribe of Ephraim; not a single mountain. **Renewed the altar of the Lord . . before the porch;** i.e., the altar of burnt-offering. As this was done on or about the 15th

had taken¹ from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that *was* before the porch of the LORD.

9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers² with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God *was* with him.

10 So they gathered themselves

together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.

11 And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil³ *which* they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.

12 And they entered into a covenant⁴ to seek the LORD God of their⁵ fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;

¹ ch. 13: 19. ² ch. 11: 16. ³ ch. 14: 13, 15. ⁴ ch. 34: 31. ⁵ Acts 24: 14.

year of the reign of this pious king, the renewal must have consisted in some splendid repairs or embellishments, which made it look like a new dedication, or in a reconstruction of a temporary altar, like that of Solomon (ch. 7: 7), for extraordinary sacrifices to be offered on an approaching occasion. — *J. F. and B.* Before the porch. The porch of the temple in Jerusalem. The altar of burnt-offering was in the court in front of the temple building.

9. He gathered all Judah and Benjamin. Not satisfied with these minor measures of purification and improvement, Asa meditated a grand scheme, which was, to pledge his whole kingdom to complete the work of reformation; and with this view waited for a general assembly of the people. And the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh. The population of Asa's kingdom had been vastly increased by the continued influx of strangers, who, prompted by motives either of interest or of piety, sought in his dominions that security and freedom which they could not enjoy amid the complicated troubles which distracted Israel. And out of Simeon. Although a portion of that tribe, located within the territory of Judah, were already subjects of the southern kingdom, the general body of the Simeonites had joined in forming the northern kingdom of Israel. But many of them now returned of their own accord. — *J. F. and B.* The tribe of Simeon, though in geographical situation it belonged to the kingdom of Judah, yet on the point of idolatry had made common cause with the northern kingdom by the erection of that impure worship of Jehovah at Beersheba, of which Amos (4: 4; 5: 5; 8: 14) speaks along with Bethel and Gilgal. — *Zochler.* Fell to him in abundance. The kingdom of Israel, under Baasha, was growing worse and worse; and their idolatry was working out its fruits in a disordered, unsettled state of the country. The better and wiser men of Israel, seeing the increasing tendency to idolatry, and foreseeing the dangers which were sure to follow, emigrated in large numbers into Judah, where Asa was so zealously working for the true worship of God and for the improvement of his people. Nothing so draws the better class and the wiser men to a country, a party, or a church, as the true spirit of reform and an earnest revival of true religion.

10. The third month. Counting, not from the inauguration of Asa, but from the beginning of the Jewish year, which began in Abib (afterwards called Nisan), from the 14th to the 21st of which month the passover was celebrated. This was about the 1st of our April. In the third month from this, 50 days after the passover, would occur the great feast of Pentecost, which Asa now celebrated in the month Sivan, or last of May, B. C. 940.

11. Spoil which they had brought. From the war with the Ethiopians and their allies. (See last lesson, ch. 14: 15.) Seven hundred oxen, seven thousand sheep. Solomon offered at the dedication of the temple far larger numbers of animals (1 Kings 8: 63). Profusion was a usual feature of the sacrifices of antiquity; 300 oxen formed a common sacrifice at Athens. Sacrifices of 1,000 oxen were not infrequent. The caliph Moktader sacrificed during his pilgrimage to Mecca, in the year of the Hegira 350, 40,000 camels and cows, and 50,000 sheep. — *Cook.* In accordance with the design of the festival, by far the greater number of sacrifices were thanksgiving or peace offerings, of which the fat only was burnt, and the rest used for food during the festival. (Lev. 7: 11, &c.; Deut. 12: 7). — *Bahr.*

12. Covenant. Solemn renewals of the original covenant which God made with their fathers in the wilderness (Exod. 24: 3-8) occur from time to time in the history of the Jews, following upon intervals of apostasy. The renewal in the reign of Asa is the first on record. — *Cook.* The proper signification of the word "covenant" is *an-eating* together, or banquet, because among the Orient-

13 That¹ whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.

14 And they sware unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.

15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire;² and he was found of them; and the LORD gave them rest round about.

¹ Exod. 22: 20. Deut. 13: 5-15; 17: 2-5. ² ver. 12.

tals to eat together amounts almost to a covenant of friendship. Strictly speaking, such a covenant between God and man amounts to a promise or act of mere favor on God's part. Generally the form of covenant is maintained by the benefits which God engages to bestow, being made by him dependent upon the fulfillment of certain conditions which he imposes upon man. The covenant of Sinai is conditioned by the observance of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 34: 27, 28; Lev. 26: 15), which are therefore called "Jehovah's covenant" (Deut. 4: 13), a name which was extended to all the books of Moses, if not to the whole body of the Jewish canonical scriptures. — *Thomas T. Perowne*. All their heart, &c. To love God with all the heart is to fix the affections supremely on him, more strongly than on any thing else, and to be willing to give up all that we hold dear at his command; to be willing to give up the life to him, and to devote it all to his service. — *Barnes*. This shows us how great were the privileges of religious knowledge which the Jews enjoyed under the Old Testament, compared to the heathen world. A nation which possessed such principles of duty as those now before us was immeasurably in advance of Greece and Rome. — *Ryle*.

13. Not seek . . . be put to death. This was one of the commandments of the law (Exod. 22: 20; Deut. 13: 9-15; 17: 2-6.) This was enjoined because the punishment of the guilty was the salvation of the country. Every one who refused to obey Jehovah was the means of destroying many people. It would have been the salvation of Judah, had Asa carried out his proclamation.

14. With a loud voice. Not secretly, as if ashamed of what they did, or afraid of binding themselves too fast; but with a loud voice to express their own zeal, and to animate one another. — *Henry*. Trumpets, cornets. These belong to the same species, under the general term of "horn." The "trumpet" here is the crooked horn, and "cornet" the long and straight one. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*.

15. Judah rejoiced. They swore, not with reluctance, but with all pleasure and satisfaction imaginable, as the bridegroom plights his troth to the bride in the marriage covenant. Every honest Israelite was pleased with his own engagements to God, and all with one another's. — *Henry*. With their whole desire. Those only experience the pleasure and comfort of religion, that are sincere and upright in it. — *Henry*. He was found of them. God is always found by those who seek after him thus. He wants to be found. His great desire for us is that we should know and love him; and no favor he can give us is so great as the revelation of himself to our souls. — Rest round about. Another period of tranquillity followed on the defeat of Zerah, — a period of probably 10 years (see verse 19, where 35 is a mistake of the copyist for 25). No state ventured to attack the powerful monarch who had defeated the vast levies of Egypt; and Asa, on his part, was apparently of a peaceful disposition. — *Cook*. Asa's last days. In verse 17 it is said that the high places were not all taken away. In ch. 14: 3, 5, intention and endeavors of the monarch are in the writer's mind; while in this verse he is speaking of the practice of the people. Labor as he would, all the high places were not taken away. — *Cook*. Asa after this had war with Baasha, king of Israel, and took the treasures from the temple, to hire Benhadad, king of Syria, to help him; for which he was reprov'd by the prophet Hanani. Asa was in his latter days afflicted with "a disease in his feet," which is generally supposed to have been the gout. Here, again, the king incurs some blame for having resorted to "the physicians instead of relying upon God." We cannot suppose that he was blameworthy for taking proper means for his recovery, but he was for relying upon them instead of upon the Lord's blessing upon the means they employed. It may have been something even worse. It is even probable that the "physicians" may have been for eigners and idolaters, whose practice consisted much in superstitious arts and idolatrous rites, instead of the priests, or rather Levites, in whose hands the medical practice of the Jews chiefly rested. The heathen resorted to their gods, and sought to win their favor, or to pacify them, by various strange, superstitious, and often brutal rites. In any case, certainly under such a state of things, to apply to a foreign physician was but an indirect mode of application to the god he served. — *Kittó*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Asa's faithfulness. In the attack on Fort Wagner, July 18, 1863, Sergeant Carney, a full-blooded African of the 54th Mass. Vols., grasped the colors from the dying color-sergeant as they were falling from his hands, and bore them to the parapet. He was struck by five bullets, but he held the staff firm in his hand; and as he was being carried back he said, "*The old flag never touched the ground, boys.*" So faithful should the Christian be, that his colors shall never touch the ground, never be soiled by sin, and he never cease in going forward in his duty.

II. Asa put away abominable idols . . . they fell to him in abundance (verses 8, 9). Mahmoud, the great Mohammedan conqueror of India, in his career of victory came to Somnât, a temple of peculiar sanctity, in the southern extremity of Guzerât. Having overcome all resistance, he entered the temple. Facing the entrance was Somnât, an idol five yards high, of which two were buried in the ground. Mahmoud instantly ordered the image to be destroyed; when the Brahmins of the temple threw themselves before him, and offered an enormous ransom if he would spare their deity. Mahmoud, after a moment's pause, declared that he would rather be known as the breaker than the seller of idols, and struck the image with his mace. His example was instantaneously followed; and the image, which was hollow, burst with the blows, and poured forth a quantity of diamonds and other jewels which amply repaid Mahmoud for the sacrifice of his ransom.

"Thou, too, Heaven's commissioned warrior to cast down each idol throne
In thy heart's profaned temple, make this faithful deed thine own.
. . . Boldly strike them; let descend the faithful blow;
From their wreck and from their ruin first will thy true riches flow."

Elphinstone in Trench's poems.

III. Covenant (verse 12). In order to give a pledge of the inviolability of their engagements, the Orientals have from time immemorial been in the habit of eating salt together. Some think that, as with all sacrifices salt was offered, a covenant of salt means one confirmed by solemn sacrifice. Others are of opinion that it contains an allusion to the fact that covenants were generally confirmed by the parties eating together, salt being a necessary appendage. This act of eating another's salt has always been regarded as a token of fidelity and friendship: hence, during the recent war in India, there were bitter complaints that those who had eaten our salt had rebelled against our authority. Tamerlane, speaking of a traitor who had gone over to the enemy, but who afterwards returned to loyalty and obedience, says, "My salt which he had eaten filled him with remorse, till at length he fled from his new master, and threw himself on my mercy." — *Biblical Treasury*.

IV. Rejoiced. Rev. Mr. Montgomery of Marash, Turkey, speaks of the heathenish nominal Christians there as exceedingly sad. The children, even, almost never laugh. They never play freely and joyously as our children do, but carry on their sports soberly as if they were aged grandfathers. They do not know the gladness of life. But when they become Christians there is a great change: old and young laugh and rejoice. Even the children of Christian parents are full of sportive gladness in marked contrast with the heathen. Christ is a good master; and the more we know of him, and the better we serve him, the more our hearts rejoice. Sour Christians are not so because of their religion, but because they have so little religion.

PRACTICAL.

1. **Took courage** (verse 8). God's promises, and what he has done for us in the past, are great encouragements to go forward in any good work.

2. **Put away idols.** So should we remove all idols from our hearts.

3. **Renewed the altar.** Whatever altars have been neglected — the altar of public worship, or the family altar, or the altar of secret prayer — should be immediately renewed; and the incense of prayer and praise rise from them in morning and evening sacrifice.

4. **Fell to him out of Israel** (verse 9). The greatest attracting power is not in new buildings, or worldly attractions, but in the fresh impulses of true religion and the manifest presence of God. Where there is a fire, people will go to get warm.

5. **Gathered themselves together** (verse 10). The value of great gatherings of the people as aids to new spiritual life.

6. **Offered of the spoil** (verse 11). We should give to the Lord, for religious uses, a due proportion of all he gives to us, in free and abundant measure.

7. **Entered into a covenant** (verse 12). It is proper to renew our covenant. It would seem the motion came, not from Asa, but from the people themselves: let every man be a volunteer that covenants with God. — *Henry*.

8. **With all their hearts.** We make nothing of our religion, if we do not make heart work of it. God will have all the heart, or none. — *Henry.*

9. **Not seek . . . be put to death** (verse 13). Those who will not seek God and his salvation cannot see life, but will find that "the wages of sin is death."

10. **With a loud voice** (verse 14). Men should confess their Saviour openly and boldly — let others know how good a Saviour they have found.

11. **Rejoiced** (verse 15). Religion is a matter of great joy. No event in life is so full of gladness and rejoicing as the full consecration of ourselves to our God.

12. **Because with all their heart.** They only experience the pleasure and comfort of religion, that are sincere and upright in it. What is done in hypocrisy is a mere drudgery; but, if God have the heart, we have joy. — *Henry.*

13. **He was found.** God is always found of those who seek him (Matt. 7: 7-11).

14. **Gave them rest.** So Jesus will give us rest on the same conditions (Matt. 11: 28-30). (1) The rest of free, glad activity. (2) Rest in the arms of the Mightiest. (3) Rest of a submissive will. (4) Rest of forgiven sin. (5) Rest in the personal love of Jesus.

LESSON IV. — JANUARY 27, 1878.

JEHOSHAPHAT'S PROSPERITY. — 2 CHRON. 17: 1-10.

TIME. Jehoshaphat reigned 25 years, B.C. 914-889. This lesson extends over B.C. 914-911.

PLACE. The kingdom of Judah.

RULERS. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah; Ahab, of Israel; Benhadad I., of Syria. Homer probably lived during the reign of Jehoshaphat.

PROPHETS. Elijah in Israel B.C. 910.

THE CONNECTION.

Asa continued to reign for 41 years. His general disposition was to serve God, and his heart continued "perfect all his days," in steadily opposing idolatry to the end. But in some other respects his prosperity led him into pride and sin. His faith failed him when Baasha made his attack; and, instead of overcoming both Baasha of Israel and Benhadad of the Syrians, he hired Benhadad to fight against Baasha. And, when Hanani the prophet reproved him, he thrust the prophet into prison. He also oppressed others of his people; and when sick of the gout he sent for idolatrous physicians instead of seeking the Lord. He died B.C. 914, and was buried in the royal rock sepulchres near Jerusalem; and immense quantities of spices were burned at his funeral. "Such burnings of incense were always made at the burial of the kings of Judah (Jer. 34: 5)." After his death his son Jehoshaphat ascended the throne of Judah.

1 And¹ Jehoshaphat his son | ened himself against Israel.
reigned in his stead, and strength-

¹ 1 Kings 15: 24.

EXPLANATORY.

1. **Jehoshaphat** (Jehovah is Judge). The son of Asa and Azubah; succeeded to the throne B.C. 914, when he was 35 years old, and reigned 25 years. His history is to be found among the events recorded in 1 Kings 15: 24; 2 Kings 8: 16, or in a continuous narrative in 2 Chron. 17: 1 to 21: 3. He was contemporary with Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram. Jehoshaphat's eldest son, Jehoram, married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. It does not appear how far Jehoshaphat encouraged that ill-starred union. The closeness of the alliance between the two kingdoms is shown by many circumstances. — *Rev. William T. Bullock, M.A.* Jehoshaphat in external prosperity most nearly rivalled the grandeur of David. He was to the kingdom of Judah almost what Jeroboam II. was in this respect to the kingdom of Samaria. The wars with Israel were at once ended by the firm alliance, sealed by the intermarriages, which took place with the house of Omri. It was almost a re-union of the kingdoms. "Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel" (1 Kings 22: 44). "He was as Ahab and Jehoram; his horses were as their horses, his chariots as their chariots, his people as their people" (1 Kings 22: 4). Here and there a prophetic voice was raised against the alliance; here and

2 And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which¹ Asa his father had taken.

3 And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim;

4 But sought to the *LORD* God of his father, and walked in his com-

mandments, and not after the doings of Israel.²

5 Therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honor in abundance.

6 And his heart was lifted up in the ways³ of the LORD: moreover he⁴ took away the high places and groves out of Judah.

¹ ch. 15: 8. ² 1 Kings 12: 30. ³ Ps. 18: 21, 22. ⁴ ch. 19: 3; 20: 33.

there a calamity seemed to follow from it; but, on the whole, the result was such as to leave behind the recollection of a reign of proverbial splendor. The fortifications which had been begun by Solomon, carried on by Rehoboam, and with less vigor by Abijah and Asa, Jehoshaphat continued on the largest scale. He built "palaces" (or "castles") and "cities of store" throughout Judah; and, following the precedent "wisely" set by Rehoboam, he placed in them his six younger sons (ch. 21: 2, 3) as well as other "princes," chosen from the "host" (ch. 17: 7). — *Stanley*. Strengthened himself against Israel. The temper and proceedings of the kings of Israel rendered it necessary for him to prepare vigorous measures of defence on the northern frontier of his kingdom; and these consisted in filling all the fortresses with their full complement of troops, and establishing military stations in various parts of the country, as well as in the cities of Mount Ephraim, which belonged to Jehoshaphat (ch. 15: 8). — *J. F. and B. Forces*. The fortresses of Judah were garrisoned with troops. — *Bertheau*.

2. Set garrisons; i.e., military posts or forts with soldiers and supplies, not only in Judah, but in the cities he still held within the kingdom of Israel. Asa his father had taken. They were first taken by Asa's father Abijah (ch. 13: 19); but held, defended, and strengthened by Asa, who probably aided his father in capturing them, so that they went in his name.

3. First ways of his father David. In the ways of David before he had swerved from God in the matter of Uriah, and the numbering of the people. Though David repented, and his sin was forgiven, yet it was still a sin, — a heinous sin; and here is a divine protest against it. Man's repentance obtains pardon of God for sin, but it does not alter the nature of sin. — *Wordsworth*. Baalim. The plural of Baal. There was but one supposed deity of that name. The plural is used either with reference to his numerous images, or with reference to the different places at which, or names under which, he was worshipped: as Baal-Berith, or Covenant-Baal (Judg. 8: 33); Baal-Zebub, or Baal the keeper-off of flies (2 Kings 1: 2); or the plural may have reference to the manifold powers and influences supposed to be united in Baal. For a similar reason, the word "God," referring to the true God, is, in the Hebrew, almost always in the plural. — *Rev. John E. Todd*. "Baalim" comprises all kinds of idolatry, even that finer kind consisting in the worship of Jehovah under certain animal forms, which is designated in verse 4 as the doings of Israel. — *Zochler*.

4. But sought to the Lord. To seek to the Lord is to strive to find out what God's will is, and then to do it with all the heart. And not after the doings of Israel. He observed with scrupulous fidelity, and employed his royal influence to support, the divine institutions as enacted by Moses, abhorring that spurious and unlawful calf-worship that formed now the established religion in Israel. Ruling in the fear of God, and for the good of his subjects, "the Lord established the kingdom in his hand." — *J. F. and B.*

5. All Judah brought presents; i.e., "free-will offerings," in addition to the regular taxes. There is some reason to believe that a "benevolence" of this kind was expected as a matter of course at the accession of a new sovereign. See 1 Sam. 10: 27. — *Cook*.

6. His heart was lifted up. This expression generally occurs in a bad sense, but it is evident that here it must be taken differently. The marginal "was encouraged" expresses fairly the true meaning. Jehoshaphat was emboldened, by his sense of the divine favor resting upon him, to go farther than he had ventured at first. He began by setting an example of faithfulness to Jehovah. He proceeded to use his best endeavors to extirpate idolatry. — *Cook*. Took away high places and groves. All the idolatrous ones; high places being the groves and altars on hill-tops, and the "groves" probably images of Ashtaroth. In ch. 20: 33, it is said that "the high places were not taken away [all of them]; for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers." Jehoshaphat made a general removal of them, and destroyed for a time the outward worship of idols;

7 ¶ Also in the third year of his reign he sent to his princes, *even* to Ben-hail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiah, to teach¹ in the cities of Judah.

8 And with them *he sent* Levites,² *even* Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah,

Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests.³

9 And they taught in Judah, as *1* had the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.

10 ¶ And the fear⁴ of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that *were* round about Judah, so that⁵ they made no war against Jehoshaphat.

¹ ch. 15: 3. ² ch. 35: 3. ³ Neh. 8: 7. ⁴ Mal. 2: 7. ⁵ ch. 14: 14. ⁶ Exod. 34: 24. Prov. 16: 7.

but the people were so idolatrous at heart, that, the moment the king relaxed his vigilance, idolatry began to show itself again.

7. In the third year. According to Hitzig's not improbable conjecture, a jubilee year, and indeed the year B.C. 912. — *Zochler*. Sent to his princes. The peculiar construction, which does not elsewhere occur, seems to be used in order to mark that the princes were not sent as teachers themselves, but only had the duty committed to them of seeing that the people were taught. The actual teachers were the priests and Levites of the next verse. — *Cook*.

7, 8. The five princes, nine Levites, and two priests, named in these verses, are otherwise unknown. — *Zochler*.

9. Taught in Judah. The ordinary work of teaching devolved on the priests; but extraordinary commissioners were appointed, probably, to ascertain whether the work had been done or neglected. This deputation of five princes, assisted by two priests and nine Levites, were to make a circuit of the towns in Judah; and it is the first practical measure we read of as being adopted by any of the kings for the religious instruction of the people. Time and unbroken opportunities were afforded for carrying fully out this excellent plan of home education, for the kingdom enjoyed internal tranquillity, as well as freedom from foreign wars. — *J. F. and B.* Book of the law. For the first time we distinctly hear of regular judicial and educational functions in the Jewish Church founded on the "book of the law." Words spoken, sung, shouted, with inspired force, we have heard before. This is the first recorded example, since the Decalogue, of such injunctions being committed to writing. In the commission which the king issued for the purpose of expounding the principles of "the book of the law," four great officers of the court and camp stand first, and the nine Levites and two priests are associated with them. The whole measure implies a sense of the moral needs of the nation. The stern address of the 82d Psalm to the judges of Israel, even if not actually called forth by this step, corresponds precisely with the appeal of Jehoshaphat. — *Stanley*. This "book of the law" could not have included less than the five books of Moses. Had they each a copy? or was this whole mission of sixteen men subdivided into several, with one or more copies to each party? How often, and in what way, did they convene the people? on sabbaths only? or did they hold protracted meetings consecutively, up to the measure of their strength, on the modern missionary touring system? These points of detail are left unrecorded. We may be sure it was a grand and noble enterprise, and may trust that it bore along with it waves of the waters of salvation. — *Cowles*. The law with them. Copies of the whole law were doubtless scarce, and therefore Jehoshaphat's commission took care to carry a copy with them. — *Cook*. They must have had besides the five books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, Job, part of the Psalms, and all the writings of Solomon.

10. Fear of the Lord fell upon all. Thus Jehoshaphat had leisure to provide for the instruction of his people. — *Bertheau*. During this religious instruction of the people, the fear of the Lord fell on all adjacent kingdoms, restraining them from war upon Judah. Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and a large amount of silver. [The word used, verse 11, seems to mean, not tribute-silver, but *burdens* of silver.] Arabian tribes also brought him sheep and he-goats in large numbers, here specified. The statements given here of the size of his standing army stagger belief, and compel us to assume an error of some copyist. Here are five divisions of the army—three from Judah, and two from Benjamin—who waited on the king, besides his garrisons in the fortified cities of Judah. Noticeably, the total is precisely double the army of King Asa as in 2 Chron. 14: 8. The Speaker's Commentary estimates that such an army implies a maximum population of 1,480 to the square mile,—fully three times as dense as in any known country of our age. — *Cowles*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. They taught the book of the law (verse 9). An African prince who was sent on an embassy with costly presents for Queen Victoria, from an Ethiopian court, preferred a modest request that our beloved sovereign would tell him the secret of England's greatness and glory. Her Majesty did not, like Hēzekiah, show the ambassador her diamonds, and her precious jewels, and her rich ornaments, but, handing him a beautifully bound copy of the Bible, said, "Tell the prince that this is the secret of England's greatness." — *Bible Class Magazine*.

II. The book of the law, and prosperity (verses 9, 10). Let us notice, first, the singular connection which exists between the presence of the Bible and popular intelligence. Look first at our own country. We have always had a free Bible, and we have found that Bible always stimulating every agency which could give us popular education, not to speak of our innumerable higher institutions. Recall for an instant our free schools. They number 70,000, and within them are daily assembled eight millions of children. A free Bible and free schools are here found hand in hand. Cross the Atlantic, and enter Scotland. Here is another land where for a long period the Bible has been eminently an honored book; and accordingly we find that Scotland is also the home of public schools. From Scotland pass to England. There has not been in England so general a knowledge of the Bible as in Scotland, and yet its presence and power have been everywhere felt; and accordingly you discover in England, also, a very large amount of popular intelligence. It is for this reason that constitutional government stands strong in England. Cross the British Channel, and look at Prussia. Here is another land where for 300 years the Bible has had free access to the people. Popular education meets us again on every side. Of all the millions of Prussia, only four per cent are unable to read. 96 per cent have received a fair degree of instruction in her schools. Cross the Rhine now, and enter France. You are in a land where for centuries the Bible was a forbidden book, and where even at the present day it is, in some districts, but little known. See, now, how completely the aspect of popular education is changed! From the last military census of the empire, it appears that 30½ per cent of the *male adult* population of France do not know their letters. Go to Southern Europe; cross the Alps, and enter Italy. For long centuries, as you are aware, the Bible was prohibited and rigorously kept from the people over all the Italian peninsula; and here the law which I am illustrating receives its most striking confirmation. In Lombardy, of the whole population, about *one-half* could read. Going southward, to Tuscany and the adjacent provinces, where the exclusion of the Bible has been much more rigorous, we find that of the whole population, about *one-quarter* can read. But even this is exceeded in Spain. Here we have another country which for 500 years has been without the Bible: her *people* have been left without it; and of her 15,000,000 — it is a fact almost incredible — 12,000,000 do not know their letters, and barely 2,000,000 can write their names! You see how unbrokenly this law is maintained in all civilized lands. Wherever the Bible is given to the people, there popular intelligence rises to its greatest height. Wherever it is absent, I do not care what the reason of its absence may be, there popular intelligence disappears. The connection of the Bible with the development of the *popular conscience* is equally evident. Despotisms live by means of standing armies, but the life of every popular government is found in public conscientiousness. It instructs the people in those two great topics in which, above all others, a self-governed people must be taught, *viz.*, their *duties* and their *rights*. See its effect in repressing violence and blood. No police is half so strong. In England it is estimated that there are annually four murders for every million of the inhabitants. In France there are 30; in Lombardy, 45; in Naples and Sicily, 100. And I remember the statement of an old and well-known journalist, who, writing from Spain, said that in the province in which he was then sojourning, with a population of about 360,000, there had been within 12 months nearly 300 murders. This was before the recent civil wars. But we need not go abroad to verify the power of the Bible on public morals. Consult your own chief of police. Ask him whether in those parts of your city where there is a Bible in well-nigh every house and school, the patrolmen are not well-nigh idle. There is no violence there, no brawls nor scenes of blood. I am somewhat acquainted with the facts upon this point in Chicago, the place of my residence; and they will be recognized as a fair illustration of this whole law of which I speak. We have in Chicago a large district known as Bridgeport. Perhaps you are familiar with the name. I wish we ourselves were so happy as to know the place only by name. A canvass of that district was lately made by a missionary of our Bible Society; and of 1,280 families which he visited there, 1,220 were without the Bible, and totally refused to have a Bible. The rowdies of the neighborhood abused and insulted him, they set their dogs on him, and one man, standing in his open doorway with a pistol, ordered him to leave his premises. That is the manner in which the Bible is regarded in Bridgeport. Now, after giving you this information, I venture to believe that if any of you contemplate moving to Chicago, you will not select Bridgeport as your home. That would not be the place in which you would choose to bring up your

children, or even to invest your money. Look at our police report, and, as you no doubt expected, you find the precincts which lie in Bridgeport the busiest of the city. Open your next Chicago paper, and, ten to one, the first case of murder or of violence which meets your eye has its scene laid in Bridgeport, the non-Bible part of the city, the part most filled with riot and crime and blood. Now, these are characteristic facts, illustrating the strange but unbroken connection between the presence of the Bible and popular morality. Name the lands of the Bible, and you name the lands of constitutional freedom. Switzerland, Scotland, England, Holland, America, received their liberties from God's word. France, largely destitute of the Bible for so many long years, has had 15 different governments, all directly or indirectly of a revolutionary origin, in 83 years. Prussia at her side, though beneath a government harsh and with features of severity, has known how to avoid the desperate remedy of constant and bloody revolutions. She has advanced her liberties by calmer methods, and has maintained herself stable, prosperous, and strong. Mexico has cast out the Bible. It is but a few months since I saw the Bible of one of her people stained with his martyr blood; and Mexico has had 56 revolutions since 1821. — *Rev. Arthur Mitchell in the Sunday School World.*

PRACTICAL.

1. He strengthened himself (verse 1). As soon as we are converted, and enter into the kingdom of God, we should strengthen ourselves against sin and Satan, our adversaries, by putting on the whole armor of God. Eph. 6: 11-16.
2. Cities which his father had taken (verse 2). Much of the good we have, we inherit from our parents; but we must use it, and strengthen it, or it will be useless to us.
3. In the first ways of his father (verse 3). Many good people have their first ways their best; their first love their strongest. — *Henry.*
4. Our imitation of others should always be of their virtues, and not of their faults. It is easy to copy faults: it is hard, but worthy, to imitate the good.
- 5 (verse 4). They that truly seek the Lord always walk in his commandments, and not in the footsteps of bad men.
6. Riches and honor (verse 5). It is undoubtedly true, though few believe it, that religion and piety are the best friends to outward prosperity. — *Henry.*
7. Heart was lifted up (verse 6). He was lively and affectionate in his religion, enlarged in heart, fervent in spirit, cheerful and pleasant in it. He was resolute and bold in the ways of God: his heart was lifted up above the consideration of the difficulties in the way of duty. Let us walk in the same spirit. — *Henry.*
8. Princes and Levites (verses 7, 8). What an abundance of good can be done when Moses and Aaron go thus hand in hand in doing it! when princes with their power, and priests and Levites with their Scripture learning, agree to teach the people the good knowledge of God and their duty. — *Henry.*
9. The need of the people is more knowledge of God's word.
10. The book of the law (verse 9). Instruction in the Bible is the necessary condition of prosperity to a nation. Go north and south, and teach all the people the law of God; and then, and then only, can we continue and prosper as a nation.
11. Fear of the Lord (verse 10). When God has a great work to be done for his people, and the rulers have a mind to do it, an opportunity will always be given for doing it.
12. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge.

LESSON V. — FEBRUARY 3, 1878.

JEHOSHAPHAT REPROVED. — 2 CHRON. 19: 1-9.

Time. B.C. 897.

Place. Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah.

Rulers. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah; Ahaziah, of Israel; Ben hadad II., of Syria.

Prophets. Elijah and Micalah in Israel, Jehu in Judah.

THE CONNECTION.

- Chapter 18, which intervenes between the last lesson and this, is almost exactly the same as 1 Kings 22. Jehoshaphat's faithfulness to God led to his great prosperity, so that he had "riches and honor in

abundance." This prosperity led him on to higher ambitions, and to wrong ways of reaching his larger aims. In order to unite the two parts of the kingdom again into one as under David and Solomon, he married his son Jehoram, then only 15 or 16 years old, to Athaliah the beautiful but wicked daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. But only trouble, instead of a glorious kingdom, came out of the unhallowed alliance. After this, Jehoshaphat with a great retinue went to Samaria on a visit to Ahab. He was persuaded to join Ahab in an expedition against the Syrians to recover Ramoth-Gilead (on the east of Jordan). Against the warnings of the prophet Micaiah they went into the battle, and were defeated. Ahab, striving to escape by disguise, was shot by a bow drawn at a venture, and died about sundown of the day of the battle; and Jehoshaphat returned inglorious to Jerusalem.

1 And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.

2. And Jehu the son of Hanani¹ the seer went out to meet him, and

said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love² them that hate the LORD? therefore³ is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.

¹ ch. 16: 7. ² Ps. 139: 21. ³ ch. 32: 25.

EXPLANATORY.

1. Returned. From his visit to Ahab at Samaria, and from the lost battle with the Syrians at Ramoth-Gilead. **In peace.** The combined attack of the two kings having failed, their troops had been withdrawn and the enterprise relinquished. The Syrians, satisfied with their victory, did not press on the retreating foe, or carry the war into their enemies' country. — *Cook.*

2. Jehu, son of Hanani. A prophet of Judah whose ministrations were chiefly directed to Israel. His father was probably the seer who attacked Asa (2 Chron. 16: 17). He must have begun his career as a prophet when very young. He first denounced Baasha (1 Kings 16: 1, 7), and then after an interval of 30 years re-appears to denounce Jehoshaphat for his alliance with Ahab. He survived Jehoshaphat, and wrote his life (2 Chron. 20: 34). — *Stanley.* **Went out to meet him.** The monarch was thus rebuked at the earliest possible moment, and in the most effective way, when he was entering his capital at the head of his returning army. — *Cook.* **Shouldst thou help the ungodly?** The question has an interest for us, far more and higher than merely speculative: how so good a man could make so bad a blunder, and involve himself in perils so great, and his family in a ruin so fearful. — *Cowles.* Perhaps Jehoshaphat thought it a pity that the two parts of the country should be separated; perhaps he hoped to unite them again into one kingdom, like that of David and Solomon. — *Samuel G. Green.* As a matter of mere human politics the conduct of Jehoshaphat in joining Ahab against the Syrians was not only justifiable, but wise. Syria of Damascus was at this time growing in power, and threatening the independence of both the Palestinian kingdoms. Her possession of the highlands of Gilead was a standing menace, no less to Judah than to Israel. Their substitution, therefore, of friendship and alliance for distrust and hostility, and their close union against the common enemy, must to mere worldly politicians in either country have seemed eminently fit and proper, and calculated to be of advantage to both nations; and the reasoning upon which such a conviction was founded must have been unexceptionable but for one circumstance. Ahab was an idolater, and had introduced into his kingdom a false religion of a new and most degraded type. This should have led Jehoshaphat to reject his alliance. Military success could only come from the blessing and protection of Jehovah, which such an alliance, if persisted in, was sure to forfeit. — *Cook.* **Love them that hate the Lord: therefore it is wrath.** On all sides of us men are living in the love of what God hates, and in the hate of what God loves. I hold it to be incontrovertible, that all clear heads, the globe around, are now united in the conviction that until a man acquires similarity of feeling with God it is ill with him. They are, I think, almost unanimously united in the conviction that if a man go through life cultivating dissimilarity of feeling with God, this prolonged personal dissonance may become chronic, and he may fall into a final permanence of bad character, and this under the momentum of evil habit, and by the simple law of the self-propagating power of sin. In the name of tremorless certainty we must proclaim everywhere, that, as a thing cannot be and not be at the same time and in the same sense, so, unless a man loves what God loves, and hates what God hates, unless a man comes into affectionate, total, irreversible self-surrender to God as both Saviour and Lord, it is ill with him, and must be so until the dissonance ceases, and that the dissonance is assuredly less and less likely to cease the longer it continues. — *Joseph Cook.* **Therefore it is wrath.** God punished his house by wars with Moab and Ammon (ch. 20: 1), and by means of his own son (the son-in-law of Ahab), who destroyed many of his children (ch. 21: 4), and by means of his daughter-in-law Athaliah, daughter of Ahab (ch. 22: 20). — *Wordsworth.*

3 Nevertheless, there are good¹ things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared² thine heart to seek God.

4 And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beer-sheba

to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers.

5 ¶ And he set judges³ in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city,

6 And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for⁴ ye judge not

¹ ch. 12: 12; 17: 4, 6. ² ch. 30: 19. ³ Ez. 7: 10. ⁴ Deut. 16: 18. ⁵ Deut. 1: 17.

3. Nevertheless good things in thee. God has not forgotten that there are good things in thee. He withholds his hand on this account, and waits to see how thou wilt act in future. — *Cook*. Jehu notices what is praiseworthy, as is proper for us when we give a reproof. — *Henry*. God never forgets the good he finds in his people. He places praise over against reproof. All through the prophets he makes bright hopes to follow his condemnations. God seems to love to speak of the good, and rejoice in all he can find thereof in his people. Taken away the groves. See Lesson IV. verse 6, and Lesson II. verse 3. Prepared thine heart. To prepare the heart is to dispose or devote it to God's service. — *Alexander*. Preparations of the heart are what the heart devises or intends. — *Stuart*. The place to begin to seek the Lord is always in the heart. When the heart is devoted to God, the service of God is easy and natural. To seek God is to strive to know and do his will, and thus become acquainted with him. God is always near us. But we may in heart be infinitely removed from our next-door neighbor; and we find God only when we enter into sympathy with him, and knowledge of his heart, by loving what he loves, by working for his ends, by joining with him in his efforts for the bringing of the world to him.

4. Dwelt at Jerusalem. He minded his own business at home, and would not expose himself by making any more such visits as he had made to Ahab. — *Henry*. Went again through the people. He himself became a teacher, travelling through his whole kingdom; not to make a show, or receive vain honor from his subjects, but to bring them back unto the Lord God of their fathers. — *Greene*. Resolving to make the utmost amends for his miscarriage, he made a progress in person through all the principal towns; and settled the magistracy with such care and exactness, that all irregularities, both in sacred and civil matters, might be prevented or duly punished. — *Pyle*. Beer-sheba (the well of the oath). A city on the southern frontier of Jehoshaphat's kingdom. It is first mentioned in Gen. 21: 31-33, when Abimelech came to make covenant with Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 26: 12-33). Jacob offered sacrifices here on his way to Egypt (Gen. 46: 1). Here Elijah bade farewell to his servant before taking his journey across the desert to Sinai (1 Kings 19: 3). Its position as the place of arrival and departure for caravans would naturally lead to the formation of a town around the wells of the patriarchs, and the Egyptian trade begun by Solomon must have increased its importance. After Nehemiah, no mention is made of it. Dr. Robinson found two deep wells still called Bir es Seba. The largest was 12½ feet in diameter, and 44½ feet to the surface of the water, with masonry reaching downward 28 feet. The smaller well was five feet in diameter, and 42 feet to the surface of the water. The site is about 27 miles south-east of Gaza. A few ruins suggest the idea of a small straggling city. — *Whitney*. Mount Ephraim. The northern extremity of Jehoshaphat's kingdom. It was the mountainous region in the southern part of the tribe of Ephraim, which Abijah had taken from the kingdom of Israel. God of their fathers. No new god, no strange deity, but to the God who had done wonders for their fathers, and blessed them in times past, and would do the same for them now. The very name was an argument for their return to the God of their fathers.

5. Judges in the land. What exact change Jehoshaphat made in the judicial system of Judah, it is impossible to determine. There had no doubt been, from the first, local judges or magistrates, in all the chief cities and towns. David seemed to have assigned the office of judge to 6,000 Levites (1 Chron. 23: 4). Probably Jehoshaphat found corruption widely spread, and the magistrates in some places tainted with the prevailing idolatry. He therefore made a fresh appointment of judges throughout the whole country. — *Cook*. The fenced cities. The limitation to fenced cities seems to imply either a concentration of judicial authority in the hands of a few, or the creation of superior courts in the chief towns, with a right of appeal to such courts from the village judge. — *Cook*.

6. And he said. The charge he gave them, — words worthy to be written in letters of gold. — *Greene*. Take heed. The means he prescribes to keep them to their duty are two: (1) Great caution and circumspection. Judges, of all men, need to be cautious; so much depends on their taking a

for man, but for the LORD, who¹ is with you in the judgment.

7 Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for *there* is no iniquity² with the LORD our God, nor respect³ of persons, nor taking of gifts.

8 ¶ Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites,⁴ and

of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.

9 And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear⁵ of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.

¹ Ps. 82: 1. Eccles. 5: 8. ² Deut. 32: 4. Rom. 3: 5, 6; 9: 14. ³ Deut. 10: 17. Job 34: 19. Acts 10: 34. Rom. 2: 11. Eph. 6: 9. 1 Pet. 1: 17. ⁴ Deut. 17: 8, 9. ⁵ 2 Sam. 23: 3.

thing right. (2) Great piety and religion. Let the fear of God be upon you (verse 7). — *Henry*. Ye judge not for man. You are God's servants more than you are man's. Every Christian in all his dealings should have the same feeling. He should be honest, truthful, kind, not only because it is due to his fellow-men, but for the sake of his Father in heaven, whose child and servant he is. He should walk worthy of his vocation as child and heir of God. **Who is with you in the judgment.** To notice what you do, and call you to account if you do amiss. — *Henry*. And to help you judge aright.

7. **The fear of the Lord be upon you.** In a preserving way, that ye may beware of judging unjustly. — *Zochler*. **No iniquity with the Lord.** He is the great Example of justice. Magistrates are called gods, therefore they must endeavor to resemble God. — *Henry*. People are apt to become like the gods they worship. A holy God, that neither sins nor looks upon sin with allowance, will keep those that serve him from sin. **Respect of persons.** God is not one who is partial in his attentions, and shows his favors with preference to rank, dignity, or other grounds of external superiority, to the neglect of those who are destitute of these advantages. It is the character and state of heart, and not the nation or rank, that God regards. — *Bradford K. Peirce*. The poor should be placed at an equal advantage with the rich, in obtaining their dues. — *Scott*. **Taking of gifts; that is, bribes,** either directly or indirectly. Taking of bribes in some form is the peculiar danger of all who hold office.

8. **In Jerusalem.** He erected a supreme court in Jerusalem, which was advised with and appealed to in all difficult cases. In Jerusalem were set these thrones of judgment, where they would be under the inspection of the king himself. — *Henry*. **Chief of the fathers.** The fathers of Israel are the heads of families; the "chief fathers" are the great patriarchal chiefs, the admitted heads of great houses or clans. It is interesting to find that such persons were now admitted to share in the judicial office, which seems in David's time to have been confined to the Levites. — *Cook*. **Judgment of the Lord . . . controversies.** These three classes constituted a supreme court, which sat in Jerusalem to review appellate cases from the inferior courts. It consisted of two divisions, the first of which had jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters, the second in civil, fiscal, and criminal cases. According to others, the two divisions of the supreme court adjudicated, the one according to the law contained in the sacred books, the other to the law of custom and equity; as in Eastern countries at the present day, the written and unwritten laws are objects of separate jurisdiction. — *J. F. and B.* Over the first he placed Amariah the chief priest; and, over the civil affairs, Zebadiah the chief man of Judah (verse 11). **When they returned to Jerusalem.** Not "when," but "and." If we detach this clause from verse 8, and attach it to verse 9, the sense is fairly satisfactory. — *Cook*.

9. **Fear of the Lord.** It means paying him reverential awe. It does not designate terror. — *Stuart*. **Faithfully.** — In firm adherence to promises or engagements, true and constant in the observance of duty. — *Webster*. Living and discharging the duties of life with a filial fear of God, as a constant element in the soul; acting, speaking, and thinking, as under the eye of God, and fearing to do aught that would meet his disapprobation. — *Pierce*. **With a perfect heart.** A heart sound, sincere, entire, in his service. This the leading aim, the main, grand purpose. — *Barnes*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. **Taking reproof** (verses 1, 4). Lais broke her looking-glass because it showed the wrinkles on her face. Many men are angry with those that tell them their faults, when they should be angry only with the faults that are told them. — *Fleming*.

II. **Joining with the ungodly** (verse 2). Sophronius, a wise teacher, would not suffer even his

grown-up sons and daughters to associate with those whose conduct was not pure and upright. "Dear father," said the gentle Eulalia to him one day, when he forbade her, in company with her brother, to visit the volatile Lucinda, — "dear father, you must think us very childish if you imagine that we should be exposed to danger by it." The father took in silence a dead coal from the hearth, and reached it to his daughter. "It will not burn you, my child: take it." Eulalia did so, and behold! her beautiful white hand was soiled and blackened, and, as it chanced, her white dress also. "We cannot be too careful in handling coals," said Eulalia, in vexation. "Yes, truly," said the father. "You see, my child, the coals, even if they do not burn, blacken: so it is with the company of the vicious." — *From the German.*

III. Love what the Lord hates (verse 2). Go yonder into Greenland with Dr. Ranke, and you will find a story among the men of the lonely North, to the effect that if a sorcerer will make a stirrup out of a strip of seal-skin, and wind it around his limbs, three times about his heart, and thrice about his neck, and seven times about his forehead, and then knot it before his eyes, that sorcerer, when the lamps are put out at night, may rise into space and fly whithersoever his leading passion dictates. So we put ourselves into the stirrup of predominant love of what God hates, and predominant hate of what God loves; and we coil the strands about our souls. They are thrice wound about our heart, three times around the neck, seven times around our forehead, and knotted before our eyes. If the poor savages yonder, where the stars look down four months of the year without interruption, are right in their sublime theory as to the solemnities of the universe, we too, when the lamps are out, shall rise into the Unseen Holy, and fly whithersoever our leading passion dictates. Greenland says that hunters once went out and found a revolving mountain, and that, attempting to cross the chasm between it and the firm land, some of these men were crushed as the mountain revolved. But they finally noticed that the gnarled, wheeling mass had a red side and a white side. They waited till the white side came opposite them; and then, ascending the mountain, found that a king lived on its summit; made themselves loyal to him; surrendered themselves to him, affectionately and irreversibly; and afterwards found themselves able to go and come safely. But the mountain had a red side, and it turned and turned; and there was no safety on it except on the white side and in loyalty to the king at the summit in the clouds. — *Joseph Cook.*

IV. The fear of the Lord. It is with men as with wheat: the light heads are erect even in the presence of omnipotence, but the full heads bow in reverence before him. — *Joseph Cook.*

PRACTICAL.

1. **Returned in peace** (verse 1). Whenever we return to our houses in peace, we ought to acknowledge God's providence in preserving our going out and our coming in. — *Henry.*

2. **Jehu went out to meet him** (verse 2). It is a great mercy to be made sensible of our faults, and to be told in time wherein we have erred, that we may repent and amend the error before it is too late. — *Henry.*

3. **Help the ungodly.** We should be careful not in any way to help the ungodly in their wicked ways: we should not indorse them, nor allow our buildings to be used for their purposes, nor join in their societies and company.

4. **Love them that hate the Lord.** We are to love our enemies, but we are not to sympathize with and approve of those who hate the Lord. This is the test of our character, whether we love the brethren, or those that hate the Lord.

5. **Therefore wrath.** The sins of even good men are punished, as was Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab.

6. **Nevertheless there is good** (verse 3). Praise for what is good should always go with reproof of what is wrong. The reproof is far more effective joined with this acknowledgment, because it shows the fairness and candor of our judgment. Sugar-coated pills are more readily taken, and just as effective.

7. **Prepare thine heart.** All true seeking of God, all real improvement of the life, begins in the heart.

8. (Jehoshaphat, verse 4, and Ahab, ch. 18: 23, 26). The manner in which we receive reproof is a test of our character, whether we are wise or foolish, whether we love God or our sins supremely (Prov. 9: 8).

9. **Went again through the people** (verse 4). If we truly repent of our sins we shall do our utmost to repair the damage we have done to religion or the souls of others. We are to be particularly concerned to recover those who have fallen into sin by our example. — *Henry.*

10. **Not for man, but the Lord** (verse 6). The true principle of godliness. Nothing will keep us always right before men but the conscious presence of God.

11. Verse 7. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

12. No respect of persons. As God treats all men lovingly and righteously, according to character, and not to wealth or condition or reputation, so should we be careful in all times and places, but especially in the house of God, to show and feel no respect of persons.

13. Verse 9. Jehoshaphat's charge is our true rule in all our conduct. These three things will keep us from evil, and enable us to live the life and die the death of the righteous: (1) the fear of the Lord, (2) faithfulness, (3) a perfect heart.

LESSON VI.—FEBRUARY 10, 1878.

JEHOSHAPHAT HELPED OF GOD.—2 CHRON. 20: 14-22.

Time. B.C. 897; soon after the return of Jehoshaphat from his visit to Samaria, and the battle in which Ahab was slain.

Place. Kingdom of Judah; Berachah, a short distance south of Bethlehem.

Rulers. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah; Ahaziah, of Israel.

Prophets. Elijah (now aged) and Micalah in Israel, Jehu and Jahaziel in Judah.

Psalms 83, 47, and 48.

THE CONNECTION.

Not long after the return of Jehoshaphat from his disastrous alliance with Ahab, and his consequent defeat at Ramoth-Gilead, and after he had made his progress through his own kingdom to rectify abuses, and establish justice and religion, there was a combined attack upon his kingdom, of several nations living east of the Jordan and Dead Sea. The Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Edomites (and several other nations mentioned in Ps. 83: 6-8, which Psalm is supposed to have been written in reference to this invasion) marched around the southern end of the Dead Sea and along its western border toward Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast, and assembled the people together to ask help of God in this new trouble. Standing in front of the people in one of the courts of the temple, he prayed the most noteworthy prayer recorded of any of the kings since Solomon. It breathes the very spirit of prayer. Their wives and children are with them, inciting the men by their presence and defenceless condition, to stronger faith and more earnest prayer. They are thus assembled before the temple, when a prophet singer, under the inspiration of God, speaks the words which form the subject of our lesson.

14 ¶ Then¹ upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit² of the

LORD in the midst of the congregation;

15 And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat,

- 'sa. 65: 24. 2 ch. 15: 1, 2; 24: 20.

EXPLANATORY.

14. Jahaziel (whom God strengthens). Then arises one of the sweet singers of the temple, a psalmist and a prophet. His countenance is full of strange joy; his eyes are bright and beaming; he lifts up his voice like a trumpet: the Spirit of the Lord is upon him. His name is Jahaziel: we know nothing more about him; perhaps on this very day he wrote the 83d Psalm.—*Greene.* **Mattaniah.** Possibly the same son of Asaph who is called Nethaniah (1 Chron. 15: 2, 12). The Hebrew "M" and "N" in the formation of proper names are often interchanged.—*Zochler.* **Asaph.** A Levite, one of the leaders of David's choir. He was in after times celebrated as a seer (or prophet), as well as a musical composer. The office appears to have remained hereditary in his family, unless he was the founder of a school of poets and musical composers who were called after him "sons of Asaph."—*Smith's Bible Dictionary.* **Spirit of the Lord.** The phrase imports a divine impulse or afflatus. It was a species of possession or inspiration for the time being, and those who were subjects of it "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." *Bush.* **In the midst of the congregation.** They were assembled in one of the courts of the temple.

15. Thus saith the Lord. Our great need in life is the certainty of a "Thus saith the Lord." When I was reeling down the marble bank a little west of Montpelier, at four o'clock on a winter's

Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be ¹ not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.

16 To-morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel.

17 Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ² ye still, and see the salvation of the

LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them: for ³ the LORD will be with you.

18 And Jehoshaphat bowed ⁴ his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell ⁵ before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

19 And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up

¹ ch. 32: 7, 8. Exod. 14: 13, 41. Deut. 1: 29, 30; 31: 6, 8. ² Isa. 30: 7, 15. Lam. 3: 26. ³ Num. 14: 9. Rom. 8: 31. ⁴ Exod. 4: 31. ⁵ Job 1: 20. Ps. 95: 6.

morning, on a railway accident, I wanted this book; and the thing which seemed to me the "rock of ages" then was Biblical inculcation, Biblical promise, Biblical exhortation, and the tried and tested certainties of this revelation of God. I wanted that for a dying pillow, and not Theodore Parker's guess, if you please. I reverence hundreds and hundreds of men who don't hold my opinion; but when I lie dying, I don't want their speculations to rest my head upon. I want that book for a pillow, for that book rests on the nature of things. That is the only honest book in the world. That tells me what I am; that tells me how to get into the mood of peace with God; that is what I wanted on a cool winter night as I rolled forty feet down a precipice, expecting instant death; and if that is what I want then, it's what I want any time, isn't it? What is true in our highest moments is true in all moments.—*Joseph Cook. Be not afraid.* These words were familiar to the people, and connected with several great deliverances (see Deut. 1: 21; Josh. 1: 9, &c.)—*Cook. Great multitude.* See connection and on verse 22. *Battle not yours, but God's.* God has taken the matter entirely in his hands, and would give them the victory without their fighting. The event, verses 22-24, explains the meaning.

16. *Go down.* As Jerusalem was seated on an eminence, they are said to go down from it, as their enemies, immediately after, to come up to it.—*Patrick.* By the cliff of Ziz. This seems to have been nothing else than the present pass which leads northward, by an ascent from Engedi to Jerusalem, issuing a little below Tekoa. The wilderness of Jeruel was probably the large, flat district adjoining the desert of Tekoa, called El-Husasah, from a wady on its northern side. (ROBINSON'S RESEARCHES, vol. 2, p. 242-4.)—*J. F. and B.* End of the brook. Rather, at the end of the gully or dry torrent-course. It is impossible to tell which of the wadys is intended, since no name like Jeruel has been found, and this is the only place where it is mentioned.—*Cook.*

17. *Stand ye still, and see.* He repeats those words which long ago rang from the lips of Moses on the Red Sea shore (Exod. 14: 13).—*Green.* Thus indicating that now, as then, the deliverance would be wholly from God.—*Cook.* And also encouraging them to trust in God now, by his deliverances in greater trials. The LORD will be with you. "One with God is a majority." "If God be with us, who can be against us?"

18. *Bowed his head.* This attitude was expressive of reverence to God and his word, of confidence in his promise, and thankfulness for so extraordinary a favor.—*J. F. and B.* Face to the ground. The king's act was different from that of the people, according to the Hebrew words expressing the modes of their worship. He "fell upon his knee, and then gradually inclined the body until the forehead touched the ground." Fell before the LORD. The word expressing this act of the people describes a sudden fall, "to rise up and suddenly prostrate the body." Such prostration was usual in the worship of Jehovah.

19. *Kohathites.* Kohath was the second of the three sons of Levi, and grandfather of Moses and Aaron. From him were descended all the priests. 1 Chron. 26: 23-32; Num. 3: 19, 27; 1 Chron. 23: 12, disclose the wealth and importance of the Kohathites, and the important offices filled by them as keepers of the dedicated treasures, as judges, officers, rulers both secular and sacred, and as singers.—*Smith's Bible Dictionary.* Korhites. Descendants of Korah, who was a descendant of Kohath. They were an important branch of the singers in the Kohathites. We find eleven Psalms assigned to the sons of Korah, to sing in the temple service. Origen says that all the Psalms thus inscribed are full of pleasant and cheerful subjects, and free from any thing sad or harsh. Probably

to praise¹ the LORD God of Israel with a loud² voice on high.

20 ¶ And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

21 And when he had consulted

with the people, he appointed singers³ unto the LORD, and that should⁴ praise the beauty⁴ of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise⁵ the LORD; ⁶for his mercy endureth forever.

22 ¶ And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

¹ Neh. 12: 42, 43. ² Ps. 81: 1; 95: 1, 2. ³ ch. 5: 13. ⁴ 1 Chron. 16: 29. ⁵ ch. 7: 3, 6. ⁶ Ps. 136.

this style of music, vocal and instrumental, was of a more sublime and lyric character, and they had more fire in their execution than the other choirs. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. **Stood up to praise the LORD.** Doubtless by the king's command; and their anthem was sung with such a joyful acclaim as showed that they universally regarded the victory as already obtained. — *J. F. and B.*

20. Wilderness of Tekoa. Tekoa was about 10 or 11 miles from Jerusalem, in a direction nearly south. It lay on the borders of the desert which skirts the highlands of Judæa towards the east. The town was built on a hill, and commanded a wide prospect over the bare table-land in this direction, with a distant view of Jerusalem. — *Cook*. **As they went forth Jehoshaphat stood.** Probably in the gate of Jerusalem, the place of general rendezvous; and as the people were setting out, he exhorted them to repose implicit trust in the LORD and his prophet, not to be timid or desponding at sight of the enemy, but to remain firm in the confident assurance of a miraculous deliverance, without their striking a single stroke. — *J. F. and B.* **Believe in the LORD.** Faith in God naturally gives courage to the heart. Despondency and doubt are fountains of weakness: faith is the source of strength and success; and, more than all, it is that state of mind in which it is possible for God to give prosperity.

21. Consulted with the people. Having exhorted and advised the people. — *Keil and Zöckler*. A wise ruler in state or church always consults with the people, learns their opinions and their drifts and tendencies, and can thus rule more wisely and successfully. **Appointed singers.** Having arranged the line of procession, he gave the signal to move forward; when the Levites leading the van with their musical instruments, and singing the 136th Psalm, the people went on, not as an army marching against an enemy, but returning in joyful triumph after a victory. — *J. F. and B.* **Jehoshaphat intended to express his firm reliance on the word of God, to animate his soldiers, and to confound the enemy, and to engage the divine blessing.** — *Henry*. The original priesthood had, as it would seem, consisted not of the fathers, but of the eldest sons of the different households, who brought to the active ministrations of the altar, not the decrepitude or wisdom of age, but the vigor and fierceness of youth. "The young man the Levite," in direct contradiction to the elders, was the name by which the ministering members of the tribe were called. Their music was the clanging trumpet or the dissonant ram's horn. Their morning hymn was the stirring war-cry: "Rise up, O LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered." The address before the battle, which, in Grecian warfare, was the duty of the general, was in Israel to be uttered by the priest. And this martial character, though it was, as we shall see, considerably modified, yet continued almost unbroken till the age of Solomon, and never entirely ceased. — *Stanley*. **The beauty of holiness.** ("In the beauty," &c., 1 Ch. 16: 29.) In such rich apparel and ornaments as were suitable to a holy occasion. — *Cook*. That is, with inward devotion, and also with outward reverence. Let them go out as a festal religious procession, as if they were treading the courts of the LORD's sanctuary. — *Wordsworth*.

22. Ambushments. The sense of the Hebrew word for "ambushments" is clear, viz., *liers-in-wait*; but who were they? Not men of Judah — for two reasons: (a) they were not to fight, but to stand still and see God's salvation; (b) they had not yet reached the scene of the battle, and did not reach it till their enemies lay strewn in death over all that bloody field. As the LORD was by promise to bear a direct hand in that fighting, we must accept the ancient interpretation: viz., that these *liers-in-wait* were God's angel-hosts, commencing the fight by surprising and smiting with panic; then perhaps leaving those allied armies to devour one another — first, Moab and Ammon against Seir till Seir was utterly cut in pieces; then Moab against Ammon till they were in turn destroyed. — *Cowley*

The meaning seems to be that the *ambushments* which the Syrians had laid against Judah, by a confusion amongst themselves, caused by the hand of God, fell upon a part of their own army, mistaking them for their enemies.—*Patrick*. Mount Seir. The possession of Esau and his posterity, and hence Seir is put sometimes for Edom. This district extended from the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulf.—*Whitney*. And they were smitten. In the camp of this vast horde, composed of different tribes, jealousies and animosities had sprung up, which led to wide-spread dissensions and fierce feuds, in which they drew the sword against each other. The consequence was, that as the mutual strife commenced when the Hebrew procession set out from Jerusalem, the work of destruction was completed before Jehoshaphat and his people arrived at the battle-field.—*J. F. and B.* When the men of Judah had reached the high lands which overlooked this battle-field, lo! their vast hosts were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. Of course the spoil was immense,—work for three days' gathering. But more to our purpose is the grateful recognition of God's mercy made by the army of Judah in the valley of Berachah—this name being significant of *blessing*—a name which the place bears to this day. If we would like to see the song they sung, we may be gratified; for there can be scarcely the least doubt that it is preserved to us in Psalm 47,—every word, sentiment, and allusion of which meets the circumstances of this case to perfection. We may almost hear the glorious shout of that army-host: "Oh, clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great king over all the earth."—*Cowles*. It is a conjecture full of probability, that the 83d Psalm was sung, it may be by Jahaziel the Levite, on this very occasion. No other event is so likely to have evoked the remembrance of the invasion of the fierce nomadic hordes of Midian and of their unexpected flight. The whirlwind of confusion fitly represents the panic which overthrew the hostile army, and sent them flying like stubble before the storm back to their native haunts.—*Stanley*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. The Moabite stone. This account, and the event which took place soon after (see 2 Kings 3) are greatly confirmed by the discovery of the famous "Moabite stone," at Dhiban in Moab, by Rev. Mr. Klein, a missionary. The fragments of this stone were purchased by the French Government for 32,000 francs, and are in the Louvre in Paris. The stone is "about 39 inches high, 20 inches wide, and 20 thick. It is a very heavy, compact, black basalt. The engraved face is about the shape of an ordinary gravestone, rounded at the top." On this stone is the record in Phœnician characters of the wars of Mesha, king of Moab, with Israel (2 Kings 3: 4). It speaks of King Omri, and other names of places and persons mentioned in the Bible, and belongs to this exact period of Jewish and Moabite history. "The names given on the Moabite stone, engraved by one who knew them in daily life, are, in nearly every case, identical with those found in the Bible itself, and testify to the wonderful integrity with which the Scriptures have been preserved."—*Palmer*. "The inscription reads like a leaf taken out of a lost Book of Chronicles. The expressions are the same; the names of gods, kings, and of towns are the same."—*Condensed from the Am. Cyc. and Bibliotheca Sacra*, Oct. 20, 1870.

II. Be not dismayed, for the Lord is with you (verse 17). When I visited one day, as he was dying, my beloved friend Benjamin Parsons, I said, "How are you to-day, sir?" He said, "My head is resting very sweetly on three pillows,—infinite power, infinite love, and infinite wisdom." Preaching in the Canterbury Hall in Brighton, I mentioned this some time since; and, many months after, I was requested to call upon a poor but holy young woman, apparently dying. She said, "I felt I must see you before I died. I heard you tell the story of Benjamin Parsons and his three pillows; and when I went through a surgical operation, and it was very cruel, I was leaning my head on pillows, and as they were taking them away I said, 'Mayn't I keep them?' The surgeon said, 'No, my dear, we must take them away.'—'But,' said I, 'you can't take away Benjamin Parsons's three pillows: I can lay my head on infinite power, infinite love, and infinite wisdom.'"—*Hood's Dark Sayings on a Harp*.

III. Praise ye the Lord. Infidelity has no songs, for it has nothing to sing about. No hymns of joy rise from the hearts of those who walk in the murky shadows of sin and unbelief. One day, after having alluded to this fact in a public assembly, a sceptic came and promised to produce "an infidel hymn-book" in the afternoon. He brought it,—a book compiled by an apostate minister, having nothing infidel in its title, and very little in its composition. It was made up of such infidel hymns as "Hail Columbia," "The Old Oaken Bucket," and various other secular songs, with now and then a parody upon some well-known hymn,—a word left out here and another added there,—giving the compiler about as much right to claim the authorship of the hymns as borrowing a pair of boots and cutting the straps off would give him to be considered a shoemaker. And this was the boasted "infidel hymn-book" which was to confute the assertions we had made. We exhibited the book, and reiterated our statements. Infidelity is songless because it is joyless, lifeless, hopeless. What theme is there for song in a life full of trouble and a death which is an eternal sleep? The true utterance of

infidelity's emotions would be a wall of deep despair. Men who are "without God" are also "without hope" in this world. — *Hastings*.

IV. The Hallelujah Victory. Praise the Lord (verse 21). If ever you go to the northern part of Wales not very far from Chester, you may visit a place called Maes-y-garmon, or the field of Germanus, and may see an obelisk standing there to commemorate a victory said to have been won in the year 448 by Christian Britons over the heathen Picts and Scots. One of the generals on the British side was a missionary named Germanus. "Germanus (says Fuller) chose a place surrounded by hills near the village, where he placed his men in ambush with instructions that at a signal they should all shout Hallelujah three times with all their might, which was done accordingly. The pagans were surprised with the suddenness and loudness of such a sound, which was multiplied by the echo, whereby their fear brought in a false list of the enemy's number. Without striking a stroke they confusedly ran away, and many were drowned for speed in the river Alen. That hallelujah, the song of the saints after conquest achieved, was here the forerunner and procurer of victory. So good a grace it is to be said both before and after a battle." — *S. Green*.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 14.) While Jehoshaphat was yet speaking, God heard; for it is never in vain to seek God. — *Henry*.

2. Jahaziel was one of the singers. That office God would honor. — *Henry*.

3. (Verse 15.) When we are on God's side, and the battle is his, no strength or numbers of the enemy should make us afraid or dismayed.

4. Go ye (verse 16.) He who commands the deliverance should command the delivered, both as to time and place. — *Henry*.

5. Stand ye (verse 17.) They were to stand and see the salvation of God, and yet were to go forward as if all were depending on them. "Work as if all depended on you: trust as if all depended on God."

6. Let but the Christian soldier go out against his spiritual enemies, and the God of peace will make him more than a conqueror. — *Henry*.

7. Praise the Lord (verse 19.) An active faith can give thanks for a promise even though it be not yet performed, knowing that God's bonds are as good as ready money. — *Henry*.

8. Praising God for his promises is a proof and help of faith.

9. (Verse 20.) Blessed is that land whose rulers lead the people in religious worship, and trust in God.

10. He had his soldiers prepared for war, but he took care (1) that faith should be their armor, and (2) praise should be their vanguard. — *Henry*.

11. That is true courage which faith inspires; nor will any thing contribute more to establish the heart in shaking times, than a firm belief of the power, mercy, and promise of God. — *Henry*.

12. (Verse 21.) There is no true worship of God except when we worship him in the beauty of holiness.

13. True holiness is always beautiful and attractive.

14. (Verse 22.) See the mischievous consequences of divisions, of the reasons for which neither of the contending parties can give any good account. — *Henry*.

15. The victory. See how rich God is in mercy, and how often he outdoes the prayers and expectations of his people. They prayed to be delivered; and God not only did that, but also greatly enriched them. — *Henry*.

LESSON VII. — FEBRUARY 17, 1878.

JOASH REPAIRING THE TEMPLE. — 2 CHRON. 24: 4-13.

Time. Joash reigned B.C. 878-839. Temple repaired B.C. 856.

Place. Jerusalem.

Rulers. Joash, king of Judah. Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash, kings of Israel; Jehu at the date of lesson. Carthage was founded B.C. 870. Hazael was king of Syria.

Prophets. The prophet Elisha was still living in Israel.

THE CONNECTION.

Joash (abbreviated from Jehoash), the eighth king of Judah, was the youngest son of Ahaziah the sixth king, and of Zibiah of Beersheba. In the year B. C. 884, he was left apparently the sole survivor of the stem of David, lopped as it had been by repeated massacres. Jehoshaphat's sons were all slain by their eldest brother Jehoram. All Jehoram's sons were killed by the invading Philistines and Arabians, except Ahaziah. Ahaziah's collateral kindred were put to death by Jehu, and his sons were all massacred by their grandmother Athaliah, except Joash, whose escape, and elevation to the kingdom is related in ch. 22: 10-12. He was proclaimed in the seventh year of Jehu king of Israel, being himself seven years old; and he reigned 40 years at Jerusalem. For the first 23 years and more, he kept his piety, and enjoyed high prosperity, under the guidance of his early guardian, the high-priest Jehoiada. His reign began with the destruction of the idols, and the renewal of the covenant of Jehovah; but the people still worshipped in the high places. In conjunction with Jehoiada, Joash undertook the reparation of the temple, which had not only been plundered of its vessels for the service of Baal, but injured in its fabric, during the reign of Athaliah. — *Wm. Smith.* Read chs. 22-24, and 2 Kings, chs. 11, 12, in connection with the lesson.

4 ¶ And it came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD.

5 And he gathered together the

priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from

EXPLANATORY.

4. *After this.* After the events recorded in ch. 23 and ch. 24, 1-3, i.e., after he grew up, and was married, and settled in his kingdom. It was not till some time after he began to reign (being then only seven years old), that he undertook to repair the temple. It was finished in the 23d year of his reign. *Was minded.* To Joash, who alone of the princes of the house of David had been actually brought up within the temple walls, the reparation of its venerable fabric was naturally the first object. From him, as it would seem, and not from Jehoiada, the chief impulse proceeded. "The repairing of the house of the Lord" is mentioned as one of the great acts of his reign. — *Stanley.* *To repair.* The temple had fallen out of repair, not so much on account of its age (it had only been standing for 130 years), as because it had not been properly preserved under the previous reigns; nay, even had been injured by Athaliah and her sons, and the money intended to keep it in repair had been misappropriated to the worship of Baal. — *Lange.* How extensive and fundamental these repairs were, and needed to be, is indicated by the original words used for "repair," which in verse 4 means to *make new*; in verse 5, to *make strong*; and in verse 27 has the sense of *founding, laying foundations.* — *Cowles.*

5. *He gathered together the priests and the Levites.* It was their duty to take measures for the restoration and repair of the building, and to collect the same tax which Moses had once laid for the purpose of building the tabernacle; i.e., all the silver which was wont to be brought into the sanctuary, and to be given for its purposes. — *Lange.* Go out into the cities of Judah. The collection was not to be made at Jerusalem only, but in all the cities of Judah, the various priests and Levites being collectors in their own neighborhoods. — *Cook.* *Money.* Not coined money; for the Hebrews had no coined money before the exile, so far as we know, but pieces of silver which had a fixed weight, and which were weighed out from man to man in the transaction of business. — *Lange.* The special cases in which this money usually came into the treasury were first, the one mentioned and ordained, Lev. 27, when any one fulfilled a vow. In this case the priest had to fix the sum to be paid, according to the sex, age, &c., of the one who had made the vow. This ransom was appropriated, in the time of Moses, to the support of the sanctuary. The second case was where any one brought money as a gift to the sanctuary of his own free will. The dependence was upon free-will offerings, as was the case in reference to the tabernacle (Exod. 35: 21); the priests and the Levites were to exert themselves to collect these, each one in his own city and in his own circle. It is to be observed that the king did not demand of the priests that they should give up, for the repairs of the temple, any income which properly came to themselves, but that he only laid claim for this purpose, to the funds which Moses had ordained should be used in this way (verse 6). — *Lange.* There was also the half shekel (about 25 cents) required in the law (Exod. 30: 13) to be paid by every one above 20 years of age, when he passed the numbering. From year to year. The annual tax for repairs. *The Levites hastened it not.* The commentators differ widely in their judgment of the conduct of the priests in this matter; some seizing eagerly upon an incident which reflects discreditably upon them, others insisting upon a construction which shall exonerate them entirely. The impression is unavoidable,

year to year, and see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened it not.

6 And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and

out of Jerusalem the collection, according to the commandment¹ of Moses the servant of the LORD, and of the congregation of Israel, for the ²tabernacle of witness?

7 For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up³ the

¹ Exod. 30: 12-16. ² Numb. 1: 50, Acts 7: 44. ³ ch. 21: 17.

that the first effort failed *because* it was in the hands of the *priests*. The systematic revenue of the priests under the Mosaic constitution had been broken up during the time of the apostasy; they had been probably obliged to make use of all the revenues, of whatever kind, for their own support; and the appropriation of this money for the repairs of the temple must have curtailed these resources. That they gave them up willingly is not to be supposed. Sums thus appropriated, but left in the administration of persons all of whose interests were opposed to this use, would not probably be found to suffice for an energetic prosecution of the work. This would also check the zeal and stop the offerings of the people. — *Lange*. See on verse 6.

6. **The king called for Jehoiada.** The chief, i.e., the high priest. When the priests had failed to appropriate the contribution to its proper purpose, the whole hierarchy, with Jehoiada at their head, met with a mild yet decided rebuke from the king, and a measure was agreed upon very similar to those which have taken place in modern times on the suspicion of maladministration of ecclesiastical property. — *Stanley*. Jehoiada was, practically speaking, regent during the minority of Joash. An increase of power to the priestly order was the natural consequence of this new position of the chief priest of the nation. We find Jehoiada shortly after bearing the revived and important title of "high priest" (2 Kings 12: 10); and the Levitical order will be seen from this time to be more mixed up with public affairs, and to have greater influence, than previously. The title of "high" or "chief priest" is passed on to Jehoiada's successors (chap. 26: 20; 31: 10, &c.), who trace their office to him rather than to Aaron. — *Cook*. It does not appear when Jehoiada first became high priest, but it may have been as early as the latter part of Jehoshaphat's reign. — *Smith*. Jehoiada lived to a great old age; and on his death his services as preserver of the royal dynasty and as restorer of the temple worship were esteemed so highly, that he received an honor allowed to no other subject in the Jewish monarchy. He was buried in state within the walls of Jerusalem, in the royal sepulchres. — *Stanley*. **The collection of Moses.** See under verse 5. **For the Tabernacle of witness.** The collection was raised originally for the tabernacle, and was transferred to the temple when that was built. The tabernacle was called the tabernacle of the congregation, because the place where the congregation of Israel, or their representative Moses, were to meet God; and the tabernacle of witness, because it was a perpetual witness to the covenant between God and his people. — *Abbott*.

7. **The sons of Athaliah.** Ahaziah and his elder brothers (ch. 21: 17), who in Jehoram's reign, before their capture by the Arabs, had with the recklessness and violence of youth carried out their mother's designs against the temple, engaging (it would seem) personally in the work of devastation, which others may have been too timid to venture on. — *Cook*. **Athaliah.** The only woman who ever sat on the throne of Judah, she made her name forever notorious (I will not say immortal), by the meanness and heartless inhumanity of her wickedness. As surviving queen-mother, it was her responsibility to bring forward her eldest son to the throne. Instead of this she murdered "all the seed royal," including all her sons upon whom she could lay her hand, and then mounted the throne herself. Athaliah held the throne six years, and then met the violent death she had so long and so richly deserved, — reigning only wickedly, and dying, we may be sure, unwept. The historian briefly — we may say, suggestively — remarks, "All the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet after they had slain Athaliah with the sword." Nothing is recorded of her except crimes: it is reasonably safe to infer that there was nothing better or else to record. — *Cowles*. **Had broken up the house of God.** Or broken *into*. Its treasures had been given away piecemeal to invaders, even by the most devout of the kings, and had been plundered twice over by the Egyptians and Arabs. Its very foundations had been injured by the agents of Athaliah in removing its stones for her own temple. — *Stanley*. **All the dedicated things.** Vessels or implements used in the temple worship. **Bestow upon Baalim.** The plural of Baal, to denote his numerous images. The worship of Baal, uprooted by Jehu in Samaria, sprang up in Jerusalem with renewed vigor, as in its native soil. The adherents of Baal, exiled from the northern kingdom, no doubt took refuge in the south. The temple became a quarry for the rival sanctuary. The stones and the sacred vessels were employed to

house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Baalim.

8 And at the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the LORD.

9 And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to

bring in to the LORD the collection ¹ that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness.

10 And all the princes and all the people rejoiced,² and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end.

11 Now it came to pass, that at what time the chest was brought

¹ ver. 6. ² 2 Cor. 9: 7.

build or to adorn the temple of Baal, which rose, as it would seem, even within the temple precincts, with its circle of statues, and its sacred altars, before which ministered the only priest of that religion whose name has been preserved to us, — Mattan. — *Stanley*. Baal is a Semitic word, signifying owner, lord, or master, and in the highest sense denoting the deity. The Hebrews never used it as a designation of their deity, but always to distinguish some god of the surrounding nations. In this sense, with some adjunct appended, it indicated several local deities; Baal-zebub was the fly god of the Ekronites, corresponding to the Zeus of the Greeks; Baal-peor answered to the Roman Priapus. With the article prefixed, it designated the Baal or chief deity of the Phœnicians. Strictly, Baal meant the highest male god (the sun or planet Jupiter), as Ashtoreth or Astarte did the highest goddess (the moon or Venus). — *American Cyclopædia*.

8. They made a chest. Compare 2 Kings 12: 9, which gives the account more fully. It was arranged that in future the dues proper to this object, and the voluntary contributions of the people, should be put into a chest with a hole in its lid, placed near the altar, and which was not to be opened but in the presence of the king's accountant. The money was then told out and placed in bags, which seem to have been delivered sealed, a certain amount in each, to those trustworthy men to whom the charge of the work was confided. We see here a distinct indication of a practice still followed in the East, where large sums of money are concerned, as in the disbursements of the government, and in the taxes and tributes paid to the crown. The money is in such cases deposited in long narrow bags, each containing a certain sum, and carefully sealed with the official seal. As this is done under the authority of the government by responsible public officers, the bag or purse passes current for the sum marked thereon, so long as the seal remains unbroken. The antiquity of this custom is attested by the monuments of Egypt, in which ambassadors from distant nations are represented as bringing their tribute in sealed bags to the king; and the same bags are deposited intact in the royal treasury. This custom is so well established in the Levant at the present day, that "a purse" has become the name for a certain amount of money thus made up, — now usually about five pounds sterling. In the receipt and payment of large sums this is a great and important public convenience, in countries where the transaction of large accounts by paper is but little used, and where, the currency being chiefly in silver, great trouble and much loss of time in counting loose money is spared. Bankers and merchants resort to the same expedient, when the seal of the firm can be regarded as a sufficient guaranty for the amount contained in the bag. — *Kittó*. At the gate. The north door into the priest's court seems to be intended, not the door of the temple building. The chest must have been placed a little to the right of this north door; between it and the altar of burnt offering, so that the people could see it from the doorway. The people were not ordinarily allowed to go within the doorway into this court, which belonged to the priests and Levites only. — *Cook*.

9. They made a proclamation. It is readily conceivable that such a solemn call, and the announcement that a special "chest" was assigned to contributions towards the restoration, would have the effect, described in the next verse, of causing all classes of the people to flock to Jerusalem and fill the chest with their offerings. — *Cook*.

10. The princes . . . the people rejoiced. It was joyfully heard, and the people now gave abundantly. Under the new arrangement, a man saw his gift placed in the chest. He knew that this was inaccessible to all except the appointed officers, and that his gift was therefore sure to be applied to the object for which he gave it. — *Lange*. They found a new joy, the joy of giving. It is a great privilege to give to good objects. Until they had made an end. Either until they had given what they were able, or until they had given enough to complete the repairs.

11. At what time the chest was brought. The chest, it appears, was from time to time, when it seemed to be full, removed from its place, and taken by the Levites to a royal office, where it was emptied in the presence of the high priest, or his deputy, and of a royal scribe; after which it was

unto the king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that *there was* much money, the king's scribe and the high priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. Thus they did day by day,¹ and gathered money in abundance.

12 And the king and Jehoiada

gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and hired masons and carpenters to repair the house of the LORD, and also such as wrought iron and brass to mend the house of the LORD.

13 So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it.

¹ 1 Cor. 16: 2.

taken back to the temple. The money was then counted out and put into bags (described under verse 8). — *Cook*.

12. To such as did the work of the service; i.e., to the overseers of the work. Hired masons, &c.; i.e., they, the overseers, "hired" them.

13. They set the house of God in his state. They *set up* the house of God in its (old) measure or proportions. — *Cook*. When the building was finished, and still some money remained, this was placed at the disposal of the king and the high priest, who used it to procure gold and silver utensils. As will be seen by reading the account in Kings, no accounts were demanded of the overseers of the building, because they were implicitly trusted; neither did the priests suffer on account of the new arrangement, but the revenues which properly belonged to them, those from the trespass offerings and the sin offerings, were still given to them. — *Condensed from Lange*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Josiah was minded to repair the house of the Lord. A rich youth in Rome had suffered from a dangerous illness. On recovering his health, his heart was filled with gratitude; and he exclaimed, "O thou all-sufficient Creator! could man recompense thee, how willingly would I give thee all my possessions!" Hermas the herdsman heard this, and said to the rich youth, "All good gifts come from above: thither thou canst send nothing. Come, follow me." He took him to a hut where was nothing but misery and wretchedness. The father lay on a bed of sickness; the mother wept; the children were destitute of clothing, and crying for bread. Hermas said, "See here an altar for the sacrifice; see here the Lord's brethren and representatives." The youth assisted them bountifully; and the poor people called him an angel of God. Hermas smiled, and said, "Thus turn always thy grateful countenance, first to heaven, and then to earth." — *Krummacher*.

II. Repairing the temple, "which temple ye are." Dr. H., one of the skilled physicians of old-time Philadelphia, was a member of the Society of Friends, though not always strictly obedient to their rules. He was called on at one time by a committee of the "meeting," who expostulated with him upon his want of conformity in some respect. He heard them patiently and in silence, and then said, "Friends, I have had a dream which I would like to tell you." They agreed to hear him, and the old gentleman proceeded: "I dreamed that the whole Society of Friends were collected in our great meeting-house, and attending to the business of the church. The subject under discussion was the filthy condition of the meeting-house, and the means of cleansing it. Many plans were proposed and discussed by the prominent members, who sat in the upper seats; but none seemed likely to answer the purpose, until one little man who occupied a seat on the floor of the house, and had not taken part in the discussion, got up and said, 'Friends, I think that if each one of us would take a broom, and sweep immediately around his own seat, the meeting-house would be cleaned.'" A good lesson for every one. Improvement may go abroad, but should begin at home. Let each man improve himself, and all will be improved. — *Hastings*.

III. Rejoicing in giving. I've knowed many a church to die because it did not give enough; but I never knowed a church to die because it gave too much. They don't die that way. Brethren, ha! any of you knowed a church to die 'cause it giv too much? If you do, jest let me know, and I'll mak a pilgrimage to that church, and I'll climb up by the soft light of de moon to its moss-covered roof, and lift my hands to heaven, and say, Blessed are de dead dat die in de Lord. — *Negro Sermon*.

IV. Hohannes, the blind missionary of Harpoot, tells of a place where the Board spent much money with few results. The people were poor. The people were to raise 600 piastres, and the Board pay the rest of his salary. They said it was impossible, they were so poor. At length after much prayer he proposed to the people to give one-tenth of their income to the Lord, and they

agreed. More money was raised than enough to pay his whole salary. That people never prospered so much before. Their crops were abundant, and their satisfaction great. They not only supported the preacher, but a school-teacher, and gave 2,000 piastres to other benevolent works. — *Foster's Cyclopædia.*

PRACTICAL.

1. The young Joash (verse 4). It is a happy thing for young people, as Joash here, when setting out in the world, to be under the direction of those that are wise and good. Let them reckon it a blessing, and not a burden and a check; a mark of wisdom, not of weakness, to listen to such. — *Henry.*

2. Was *ruined*. Whosoever has the will, will find a way, or make one.

3. Repair the house of the Lord. It is a bad sign for a people when they let their churches and means of spiritual growth run to decay. No community prospers, who build their own houses, and neglect the Lord's house.

4. It is wise and good never to let God's spiritual temple begin to decay. But if it has been neglected, we must seek a revival of God's grace, and build again the waste places.

5. Hastened not (verse 5). Church work is usually slow work, but it is pity church men, of all men, should be slow at it.

6. Many a good work is hindered, because those to whom it is intrusted hasten not.

7. The Lord's work is the last of all at which we should be slow and negligent.

8. The king (verse 6). Many a good work would be done that now lies undone, if there were a few active men to stir in it and put it forward.

9. Called for Jehoiada. In the shows of devotion, those who have the form of godliness may outstrip those who have the power of it. Joash is more zealous about the repairs of the temple than Jehoiada himself, whom he reproves for remissness therein. It is easier to BUILD temples than to RE temples to God. — *Henry.*

10. The collection. There is no exact tax or percentage required of the gospel, as of the Jews, because the free-will offerings should be more from the Christian's heart than that which was required of Jews; and a free gift is far more profitable to the giver than a forced tax of much larger amount.

11. Collections of money are a convenient way by which all of us may have a part in the building of God's spiritual temple: we can thus preach to the heathen with the missionary, and give the good news to the destitute all over the world.

12. Sons of Athaliah. A wicked mother brings up her children in wickedness. We cannot sin and ourselves alone suffer for it.

13. The wicked are always seeking to destroy and break down the institutions of religion.

14. Dedicated things upon Baalim. Wicked men use even the Bible to sustain their bad practices and teachings, as Satan quoted Scripture whereby to tempt our Saviour.

15. The people rejoiced (verse 10). It is more blessed to give than to receive. It is a great privilege to have frequent collections and appeals, and opportunities of giving. It is the meagre and not the free givers who complain of "so many calls."

16. All the days of Jehoiada. We see the influence of a good old man. The old are often exceedingly useful, even after their more active days are ended, — even more useful than the young and active.

LESSON VIII. — FEBRUARY 24, 1878.

UZZIAH'S PRIDE PUNISHED. — 2 CHRON. 26: 16-23.

TIME. Uzziah reigned 52 years, B.C. 810-758. Greek history begins, — era of Olympiads, B.C. 776. The incidents of the lesson occurred probably between B.C. 767 and 761.

PLACE. Jerusalem, capital of Judah.

RULERS. Uzziah (also called Azariah), king of Judah; Menahem, king of Israel at date of lesson. Uzziah was contemporary with nearly half the reign of Jeroboam II., with Zachariah, Shal-lum, Menahem, and Pekahiah, kings of Israel, and the last year of his reign was the first of Pekah's.

PROPHETS. Jonah, who was probably the earliest of the minor prophets, who was sent to Nineveh; Amos, who was born in Judah, but prophesied wholly in Israel; Hosea, who prophesied to

both Judah and Israel; probably Joel; and also Isaiah, who began his work in the latter part of the reign of Uzziah in Judah.

Read in connection with the lesson, 2 Kings, chs. 14, 15, all of 2 Chron. 26, Isa. 1: 1.

THE CONNECTION.

Joash was succeeded by Amaziah his son, who was a man of a different stamp. He commenced his reign by vigorous operations against the Edomites, who had revolted against his authority, and obtained signal victories over them. Irritated at certain aggressions and flushed with his recent conquests in Edom, he declared war against the king of Israel. A battle took place at Beth-shemesh, in which Judah was completely routed: the walls of Jerusalem were thrown down, the treasures of the temple carried off to Samaria, and Amaziah himself was taken captive. He perished 15 years after at Lachish, whither he had fled from a conspiracy of the priesthood, whom he had offended by his idolatrous tendencies. Amaziah was succeeded by his son *Asariah* or *Uzziah*. — *Palmer*. An obscurity rests on Uzziah's reign, the longest except that of Manasseh, the most prosperous excepting that of Jehoshaphat, since the time of Solomon. In the narrative of the Book of Kings, this long period is passed over in almost absolute silence. It is from the Book of Chronicles that we derive our impressions of his splendor. — *Stanley*. The facility with which Jerusalem had been taken in the time of Amaziah seems to have made a strong impression upon the mind of his son Uzziah, and to have rendered him studious of means by which cities might be defended. The ordinary fortifications, in their strongest form, were applied to the walls of Jerusalem and other towns; but beyond this we now first in history or monument hear of military engines for the defence of towns, mounted upon the walls. It is said of Uzziah: "He made in Jerusalem engines invented by cunning men, to be upon the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal." And it is immediately added, that "his name spread far abroad." King Uzziah, wisely considering public security as the best foundation of public prosperity, put the country in a state of vigorous defence, and was enabled to hold a strong hand over the nations which had been the troublers of Judah. He repelled the Philistines and Arabians; he established his power over Edom, and fortified Elath, the port on the Red Sea; and, awed by his power, the Ammonites submitted to him. He organized his military force; and, as men had been more at command than efficient weapons, he laid up abundant stores of good weapons and shields in his arsenals. He also built strong castles on the frontier, as well as towers through the open country towards the desert for the protection and refuge of those who were out with their flocks in distant pastures. "He loved husbandry;" and, both by his example and encouragement, he promoted agriculture, planting, and the breeding of cattle. These wise measures produced, under the Lord's blessing, a rapid return of prosperity to the country, which does not seem to have been materially injured by the great earthquake (Amos 1: 1; Zech. 14: 5) which happened in this reign, and by which several cities in Israel also were swallowed up: indeed, the northern portion of Palestine, in the parallel of the Lake of Tiberias, usually suffers more than the south from such visitations. Thus Uzziah became great, not by his own wisdom, but because he was a righteous man, and was therefore "marvellously helped till he was strong." But, alas! "when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." — *Kitto*.

16 But¹ when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction:² for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went³ into

¹ ch. 25: 19. Deut. 8: 14. ² Prov. 16: 18. ³ 2 Kings 16: 12, 13.

EXPLANATORY.

16. When he was strong his heart was lifted up. Being elated with pride, in consequence of his success and prosperity and power, and perhaps because he was connected by marriage with the priestly line (2 Kings 15: 33). His father had burned incense to the gods of Edom (25: 14), and Jeroboam had burned incense to the calf at Bethel (1 Kings 13: 1): they had aspired to the dignity of priests. Uzziah would cleave to God's altar, but he was inflamed with a similar ambition. — *Wordsworth*. His ambition was to be chief in all things, both in church and state. To his destruction. Rather, his heart was lifted up to do wickedly. — *Cook*. He transgressed. None but the priests might offer incense on the golden altar before the veil, or even, under ordinary circumstances, enter within the temple building, which represented the original tabernacle (Num. 8: 1-7). Uzziah must have deliberately determined to invade the priest's office, thus repeating the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. — *Cook*. To burn incense. The incense employed in the service of the tabernacle was compounded of four perfumes: tofte, onycha, gallanum, and pure frankincense (Exod. 25: 6). All incense not made of these ingredients was forbidden to be offered. In addition

the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

17 And Azariah¹ the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, *that were valiant men*:

18 And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, *It appertaineth* not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but

to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out² of the sanctuary: for thou hast trespassed; neither *shall it be* for thine honor³ from the LORD God.

19 Then Uzziah was wroth,⁴ and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while⁵ he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even

¹ 1 Chron. 6: 10. ² 1 Cor. 5: 5. ³ 1 Sam. 2: 30. ⁴ ch. 25: 16. ⁵ Num. 12: 10. 2 Kings 5: 27.

to the four ingredients already mentioned seven others are mentioned, thus making eleven which the Jewish doctors affirm were communicated to Moses on Mount Sinai. Josephus mentions thirteen. The incense possessed the threefold characteristic of being salted, pure, and holy. Salt was the symbol of incorruptness, and nothing was offered without it except the wine of the drink-offerings, the blood, and the wood. The incense thus compounded was specially set apart for the service of the sanctuary: its desecration was punished with death. Aaron as high priest was originally appointed to offer incense. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. Altar of incense. The altar of incense was also called the golden altar to distinguish it from the altar of burnt-offering, which was called the *brazen* altar. The name "altar" was not strictly appropriate, as no sacrifices were offered upon it; but once in the year on the great day of atonement, the high priest sprinkled upon the horns of it the blood of the sin offering. That in the tabernacle was made of acacia-wood, overlaid with pure gold. In shape it was square, being a cubit in length and breadth, and two cubits in height. Like the altar of burnt-offering, it had horns at the four corners, which were of one piece with the rest of the altar. It had also a top or roof on which the incense was laid and lighted. The altar stood in the holy place, before the veil; that is, by the ark of the testimony. The altar in Solomon's temple was similar, but was made of cedar overlaid with gold. From the circumstance that the sweet incense was burnt upon it every day, morning and evening (Exod. 30: 7, 8), as well as that the blood of atonement was sprinkled upon it, this altar had a special importance attached to it. It is the only altar which appears in the heavenly temple (Isa. 6: 6. Rev. 8: 3, 4). — *Ibid*.

17. **Azariah the priest.** Though the name of this Azariah does not seem to occur in the list of 1 Chron. 6: 4-15, yet there can be no reasonable doubt that he was the high priest at the time. As such, it would have been his duty to oppose the sacrilegious act of the king. — *Cook*. With him **fourscore priests**. Uzziah had no doubt entered the temple with a considerable retinue. As it was possible he might resist the high priest's attempt to expel him, Azariah seems to have intended in that case to use force. — *Cook*. **Valiant men**; so called because they were courageous enough to oppose the king. Many of the priests were young, warlike men, and were accustomed to arms.

18. **They withstood.** His entrance was opposed, and strong remonstrances made. **It appertaineth not unto thee.** It is not your place; it does not belong to you. **To the priests, the sons of Aaron.** It has been alleged by some that the functions of the high priesthood were exercised by David and Solomon, and that Uzziah imitated them on this occasion; but, though David and Solomon and other religious kings of Judah took a lead in the sacred festivals of the nation, yet they never assumed these functions which by the Levitical law appertained to the office of the priests. — *Wordsworth*. In his arrogance, he claimed the functions of the priests; not those which we have seen always exercised by judges and kings of offering burnt sacrifices, but those which belonged exclusively to the sons of Aaron. — *Smith*. **Neither shall it be for thine honor, &c.** It will be a disgrace to you, and you shall not receive honor from God for it.

19. **Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer.** Rage and threats were the only answers he designed to return; but God took care to vindicate the sacredness of the priestly office, and, at the moment of the king's lifting the censer, struck him with leprosy. At this moment, according to Josephus, the shock of the earthquake (Amos 1: 1) broke upon the city. Its more distant effects were visible long afterwards. A huge mass of the mountain on the south-east of Jerusalem rolled down to the spring of Enrogel, and blocked up the approaches of the valley of the Kedron and the royal gardens. Its immediate effect, if rightly reported, was still more striking. As has happened in like calamities, even in Jerusalem itself, the solid building of the temple rocked, its roof opened, the darkness of its inner recess was suddenly lighted up by the full blaze of the sun; and as the

rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar.

20 And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself¹ hastened also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.

21 And Uzziah² the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house,³ being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

22 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah⁴ the prophet, the son of Amoz, write.

¹ Esth. 6: 12. ² 2 Kings 15: 5. ³ Lev. 13: 46. Num. 5: 2; 12: 15. 2 Kings 7: 3. ⁴ Isa. 1: 1.

king looked up towards it, a leprous disfigurement mounted into his face, and rendered necessary that exclusion which, on the ground of his royal descent, had been doubtful. He retired at once from the temple, never again to enter it; and for the remainder of his life, as one of the accursed race, remained secluded within the public infirmary. His grave was apart from the royal vaults, in the adjacent field. Censer. A small portable vessel of metal, fitted to receive burning coals from the altar, and on which the incense for burning was sprinkled by the priest to whose office this exclusively belonged, who bore it in his hand, and with whose personal share in the most solemn ritual duties it was thus in close and vivid connection. The only distinct precepts regarding the use of the censer is found in Num. 4: 14, where, among the vessels of the golden altar, "censers" are reckoned; and in Lev. 16: 12, Solomon prepared censers of pure gold. Possibly their general use may be explained by the imagery of Rev. 8: 3, 4, and may have been to take up coals from the brazen altar, and convey the incense while burning to "the golden altar," or altar of incense, on which it was to be offered morning and evening. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. Leprosy. In the hot, dry, and dusty atmosphere of the East, there has always been great prevalence of all kinds of skin diseases; and of these leprosy has always been considered the most terrible. There are several different varieties of it; some of them producing results, in the disfiguration and decay of the body, too horrible for description. Leprosy was dreaded, not only for the pain and suffering caused by the disease, but also for the social disqualifications which it brought. The leper was loathed and shunned. Among the Hebrews he was compelled to live alone outside of the city, and was not permitted to join in public worship, or to mingle with people, or to touch any one, or to allow any one to approach without warning him with the cry, "Unclean" (Lev. 13: 45, 46; 2 Chron. 26: 21). — *J. E. Todd*. In his forehead. While Uzziah yet speaks, God strikes. Ere the words of fury came out of his mouth, the leprosy appears in his forehead. Had it broken forth in his hand, or foot, or breast, it might have been hid from the eyes of men; but now his forehead is smitten with this judgment, that God may proclaim to all beholders, "Thus shall it be done to the man whose arrogance hath thrust him upon a sacred charge." — *Bp. Hall*. From beside the incense altar. As they stood beside or in front of the incense altar.

20. Thrust him out. Because nothing unclean could enter the temple, or associate with the holy things (Lev. 13: 46. Num. 5: 2). The temple was a type of the heavenly city into which nothing unclean can enter (Rev. 21: 27). Himself hastened also to go out. Death was denounced by the law against those who invaded the office of the priest (Num. 18: 7); and death had been the actual punishment of Korah and his company. Uzziah, when he felt the hand of God laid upon him, feared probably lest from him, too, the extreme penalty should be exacted, and therefore hastened to quit the sacred building where his bare presence was a capital crime. — *Cook*.

21. In a several house, i.e., in a separate house. Some understand a "hospital" or "infirmary;" others translate "a house of liberation," and "a house of retirement." He was cut off from the house of the Lord; i.e., he was shut out from the temple, being obliged to withdraw from intercourse with others, and living in a separate place. So early as the second year of the Exodus, lepers were obliged to reside without the camp (Num. 5: 1-4). When the Israelites came into their own land, and lived in cities, the spirit of the law thus far operated, that lepers were obliged to reside in a separate place, which was called "the house of uncleanness;" and from this seclusion, not even kings, when they became leprous, were exempted. — *Dush*. Jotham his son was over the king's house; i.e., he was prime minister, and in this capacity he judged the people of the land as ruler on behalf of the king. — *Keil*.

22. The rest of the acts . . . did Isaiah . . . write. Isaiah speaks of himself as having seen his visions partly in "the days of Uzziah" (chap. 1: 1; 6: 1). Since, however, he lived far into

23 So¹ Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings; for they said, He is a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

¹ Isa. 6: 1.

the reign of Hezekiah, Uzziah's great-grandson, he cannot have been contemporary with Uzziah as an adult for more than a very small portion of his long reign. Most critics regard him as about 20 when Uzziah died. He must then have written his history of Uzziah's reign rather from documents and accounts of others, than from his own knowledge. — Cook. The book containing the acts of Uzziah by Isaiah is among the books mentioned in the Bible, which have been lost.

23. They buried . . . in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings. He was interred not in, but near, the sepulchre of the kings, as the corpse of a leper would have polluted it. — J. F. and B.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. When he was strong, his heart was lifted up. In 1201 Simon Tournay, after he had excelled all his contemporaries at Oxford in learning, and become so eminent in Paris as to be made the chief doctor of the Sorbonne, grew so proud, that, while he regarded Aristotle as superior to Moses and Christ, he considered him as but equal to himself. He became such an idiot at length, as not to know one letter in a book, or one thing he had ever done.

"The tower which rears its head so high,
And bids defiance to the sky,
Invites the hostile winds;

The branching tree, extending wide,
Provokes destruction by its pride,
And courts the fall it finds."

HANNAH MORE.

How true is it that "pride goeth before destruction"! Nebuchadnezzar, inflated with pride, walked amid the splendors of his palace, and, complacently admiring the productions of his skill and genius, exclaimed, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" (Dan. 4: 30). But in the midst of this self-laudation God smote him: "there fell a voice from heaven," and both his kingdom and his reason departed. See, too, the conduct of Herod, surrounded by all the pomp of state, "upon a set day," "arrayed in royal apparel," "upon his throne," making an oration. The people, with blind infatuation, gave a shout, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man;" and the king, with equally blind presumption, accepted their blasphemous adulation. While swelling with pride, he was humbled to the dust. "The angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory" (Acts 12: 21-23). — *Biblical Treasury*.

II. Presumption is a firework made up of pride and fool-hardiness. It is indeed like a heavy house built upon slender crutches. Like dust which men throw against the wind, it flies back in their face, and makes them blind. Wise men presume nothing, but hope the best. Presumption is hope out of her wits. — T. Adams.

III. While he was wroth . . . the leprosy rose up in his forehead. Among many other significant devices, some beyond the seas have a picture of a man, with a full blown-bladder on his shoulders, another standing by and pricking the bladder with a pin; the motto "How suddenly!" hinting thereby the sudden downfall of all wordly greatness. How soon is the courtier's glory eclipsed, if his prince do but frown upon him; and how soon the prince himself becomes a peasant, if God give way unto it! How soon are the windy hopes of sinful men let out, upon the least touch of God's displeasure! Riches, honors, preferments, if God be but pleased to blow upon them, are suddenly reduced to nothing. — *Spencer*.

PRACTICAL.

1. Heart lifted up (verse 16). How hard it is to bear prosperity with moderation and humble thankfulness! — *Patrick*.

2. How easy it is for men to be swollen with admiration of their own strength and glory, and to be lifted up so high as to lose sight both of the ground whence they rose, and the hand that advanced them! — *Bishop Hall*.

3. Pride leads to its own punishment, because it leads men to do those things which cause a fall

4. Prosperity, riches, honors, are not evil in themselves. It is pride in them which ruins men.

5. Withstood (verse 17). It is the duty of ministers to reprove sinners, no matter how great or influential they may be.

6. Valiant men. It takes valiant men, men of great courage, to be true priests and ministers.

7. Wroth (verse 19). Foolish men, proud men, are angry at those who reprove them: only the wise receive reproof kindly.

8. Censer for incense. The incense of our prayers must be by faith put into the hands of our great high priest, else we cannot expect it should be accepted by God. — *Henry*.

9. How easy it is for God to humble the most stubborn pride!

10. Thrust him out (verse 20). If presumptuous men will not be made to see their error by the judgments of God's mouth, they shall be made to see it by the judgments of his hand. — *Henry*.

11. Nothing unclean or defiling, like the leprosy of sin, can enter the kingdom of God, or the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21 : 27).

12. Separate house (verse 21). Sin separates and divides men. Holiness binds them together in brotherhood.

13. They that covet forbidden honors forfeit allowed ones. Adam, by eating of the tree of knowledge which he might not eat of, debarred himself from the tree of life of which he might have eaten. — *Henry*.

LESSON IX. — MARCH 3, 1878.

AHAZ'S PERSISTENT WICKEDNESS. — 2 CHRON. 28 : 19-27.

TIME. Ahaz reigned B.C. 742-726; soon after the founding of Rome, B.C. 753.

PLACE. Jerusalem, the capital of Judah.

RULERS. Ahaz, king of Judah; Pekah, king of Israel, who forms an alliance with Rezin, king of Damascus, and invades Judah twice, carrying many captives to Samaria. Pekah becomes tributary to Assyria; two and a half tribes east of Jordan, and part of the northern Israelites, carried captive. Pekah slain by Hoshea, who begins to reign in B.C. 730. Tiglath-pileser, founder of Assyria; Nabonassar, founder of Babylon.

PROPHETS. Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah.

Read 2 Kings 15 : 32-38, and ch. 16; 2 Chron. chs. 27 and 28; Isa. 7.

THE CONNECTION.

Jotham, the son and successor of Uzziah, reigned 16 years, leaving a fair record morally, fully up to the best side of his father's, and avoiding the great sin which brought such gloom over the closing years of Uzziah. He followed the steps of his father in the line of building cities, castles, towns; and in wars against the contiguous Ammonites, who probably provoked this by their incursions. The comprehensive generalization of his reign is, "So Jotham became mighty because he prepared his ways;" better, — he purposely ordered, determined his ways as before God; steadfastly aimed to please God. A worthy record! Only seven verses are devoted to his history by the author of Kings (2 Kings 15 : 32-38). The fuller record by the author of Chronicles gives him one short chapter (27). Ahaz, Ahaz, son and successor of Jotham, in his reign of 16 years made himself notorious for his wickedness, surpassing in crime and downright depravity all the kings of Judah before him. In fact, it is intimated that he walked in the ways of the most wicked kings of Israel, surpassed in sin by few even if by any of them. To his record the author of Kings devotes one chapter (16), and the author of Chronicles one (28), each containing some new matter, and also some matter common to both. Both of his historians give his history in the philosophical order: first, his great sins, and then their legitimate results; defeat, disaster, the destruction of his immense armies; the exhaustion of his treasury by foreign exactions; the "bringing of Judah low and making her naked because of his sore transgressions against the Lord." — *Chronicles*.

19 For the LORD brought Judah¹ low because of Ahaz king of Israel: | for he made Judah naked,² and transgressed sore against the LORD.

¹ Ps. 106 : 43. ² Exod. 32 : 25. Rev. 3 : 17, 18; 16 : 15.

EXPLANATORY.

19. For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz. In the line of sins, Ahaz introduced Baal-worship, never brought into Judah before, save for a short time under Jehoram

20 And Tilgath-pilneser¹ king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him
not.

¹ 2 Kings 15: 29; 16: 7-9.

and Athallah. He was the first to desecrate the famous "valley of the son of Hinnom" (south of Jerusalem), not only burning incense there to idol gods, but burning his own children there in the fire, after the abomination of the old Canaanites, — a horrid worship which seems to have been kept up vigorously in Moab and Ammon. For such sins, judgments from God came speedily, and fell thick and fast. The Syrians smote him, and carried a great multitude of captives to Damascus. Pekah, king of Israel, came also upon him, and "slew in one day 120,000, all valiant men; because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers." He also took 200,000 captives, — "women, sons, and daughters," and brought them to Samaria with immense spoil. Calamities by war came upon Ahaz, not from the north only, but from the south and south-west. "The Edomites came and smote Judah, and carried away captives;" the Philistines also invaded the cities of the low country (the great plain on the south-west), and all the south of Judah, and took several important cities (named ver. in 18). Repeatedly he sought help from the king of Assyria; at first with the very partial success of relief from Rezin of Syria. To buy his help or glut his rapacity, Ahaz not only robbed the temple, his own palace, and those of his princes, of their treasures, but the temple of some of its ornamental and indeed useful portions, named by the author of Kings (ch. 16: 17, 18). Even these calamities and straits utterly failed to turn the heart or even the thought of Ahaz toward the true God. He only rushed with the more infatuation to idol gods for help, — to the gods of Damascus, whom he supposed to have smitten him, and wished to propitiate, so that they should help him instead. "But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel;" i.e., of his own nation. Taken in whole, the record of Ahaz is one of unmitigated crime and folly, and of consequent ruin. Not one redeeming feature appears throughout his entire history. It seems hard to account for such depths of depravity, such infatuation of guilt and folly. — *Cowles*. King of Israel. Ahaz is called here king of Israel, not because he acted as if he had been a king of the northern kingdom rather than the king of Judah, nor yet from irony because his reign was the bitterest satire upon the name of "king of Israel, the people of God;" i.e., he had allowed Judah to break loose from all restraints of true religion, and to turn to any idolatry they preferred (verses 2-4). — *Cook*. He seems to have had a mania for foreign religious practices. Not only did he employ to the utmost all the existing sanctuaries, but he introduced new ones in every direction. The worship of Molech, the savage god of Ammon, was now established not only on the heights of Olivet, but in the valley of Hinnom (2 Kings 16: 3), in a spot known by the name of Tophet, close under the walls of Jerusalem. There the brazen statue of the god was erected, with the furnace within, or at its feet, into which the children were thrown. To this dreadful form of human sacrifice Ahaz gave the highest sanction by the devotion of one or more of his sons. The king's chief work, and that apparently on which he most prided himself, was the new altar, framed after the model of one which he had seen at Damascus (2 Kings 16: 10-16). The high priest Urijah, the friend of Isaiah, lent himself to this innovation. The venerable altar of David, which had always been somewhat out of keeping with the magnificence of the temple, was now displaced, and remained apart on the north side of the temple court, reserved for any use which the innovating king might think fit to make of it. To the new altar he devoted all his reverence; and, with all the royal state of the ancient sacrifices, he came there morning and evening, to present in his own person the accustomed offerings. — *Stanley*. The character of this king's reign, the voluptuousness and religious degeneracy of all classes of the people, are graphically portrayed in the writings of Isaiah (ch. 7), who prophesied at that period. The great increase of worldly wealth and luxury in the reigns of Azariah and Jotham had introduced a host of corruptions which bore fruit in the idolatrous practices of every kind, which pervaded all parts of the kingdom. — *J. F. and B.* Transgressed sore against the Lord. "Had dealt very faithlessly" with the Lord. In both this and the preceding expression there is the same idea of apostasy. — *Cook*.

20. Tilgath-pilneser. This form of the name, used also in 1 Chron. 5: 6, 26, is not so correct as the form used in Kings, which is Tiglath-pileser. Tiglath-pileser is the second Assyrian king mentioned in Scripture as having come in contact with the Israelites. He ruled Assyria during the latter half of the eighth century before our era. From his own inscriptions we learn that his reign lasted at least 17 years; that, besides warring in Syria and Samaria, he attacked

*From taken from the Bible
a new heart is the source of wisdom*

FIRST QUARTER.

LESSON IX.

2 CHRON. 28: 19-27.

21 For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not.

22 ¶ And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more

against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.

23 For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they

1 Jer. 10: 5; 41: 17-28.

Babylonia, Media, Armenia, and the independent tribes in the upper regions of Mesopotamia, thus, like the other great Assyrian monarchs, warring along the whole frontier of the empire; and finally, that he was (probably) not a legitimate prince, but an usurper, and the founder of a dynasty. The destruction of Damascus, the absorption of Syria, and the extension of Assyrian influence over Judea, are the chief events of Tiglath-pileser's reign, which seems to have had fewer external triumphs than those of most Assyrian monarchs. No palace or great building can be ascribed to this king. His slabs, which are tolerably numerous, show that he must have built or adorned a residence at Calah, where they were found. They bear marks of wanton defacement, and it is plain that the later kings purposely injured them; for, not only is the writing often erased, but the slabs have been torn down, broken, and used as building materials by Esar-haddon in the great palace which he erected at Calah. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. Assyria. A country of Asia, lying upon both banks of the Tigris, the seat of one of the great monarchies of antiquity, and now comprised within the easternmost dominions of the Turkish Empire. The name comes from Asshur, a son of Shem, and grandson of Noah, probably a leader in one of the great early migrations, who was deified and recognized as the tutelary divinity of the country occupied by the descendants of the clan of which he was the chief. — *Appleton's Cyclopædia*. Distressed him, but strengthened him not. (See on verse 19.) This statement, and that at the end of the next verse ("he helped him not"), have been regarded as contradicting the narrative of Kings, where Tiglath-pileser is said to have "hearkened to Ahaz," and to have assisted him by attacking the Syrians, capturing Damascus, carrying its inhabitants away captive, and killing Rezin (2 Kings 16: 9). But the narrative of Chronicles was never intended to stand alone, the writer constantly assuming that what is said in Kings will be known to his readers. Here it is his object to note that the material assistance rendered by Tiglath to Ahaz was no real "help" or "strength," but rather a cause of "distress." It did not replace Ahaz in an independent or safe position: it merely substituted an actual for a threatened subjection. It straitened Ahaz's resources by depriving him of all his accumulated treasure, and it left him subject to a heavy annual impost. Moreover, it led him on to further idolatry and impiety, which, by provoking God's anger, tended to the ruin of the nation. — *Cook*.

21. Took away a portion . . . of the house of the Lord. Ahaz imitated in this the example of previous kings, as of Asa (1 Kings 15: 18) and Joash (2 Kings 12: 18). Political necessity was always held to justify the devotion of the temple treasure to secular purposes. — *Cook*. This was at the time that he sent the embassy with its cry for help to the mighty Assyrian king (verse 16), for with empty hands he need not approach him. Compare 2 Kings 16: 7, 8. — *Lange*. The house of the king, i.e., his own palace. The treasures of the king's house as well as those of the "princes" (the high officers of the palace, or perhaps also the princes of the royal house), must have been contributed, that the gift sent with the ambassadors might be worthy of acceptance. — *Lange*. He helped him not. See on verse 20.

22. In the time of his distress; i.e., when Tiglath-pileser was oppressing him. There is not the least hint that Ahaz in his trouble sought help from the Lord. — *Cowles*. This king Ahaz. This expression seems to imply contempt. Ahaz well deserves to be thus branded, as he was the most notorious offender that had ever been among the kings of Judah. The predominant feature in his character was weakness, — weakness of spirit, and weakness of intellect. History records nothing about him that is worthy of respect. — *Lange*.

23. He sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus. This adoption of the Syrian gods, Hadad, Rimmon, and others, as objects of worship by Ahaz, no doubt preceded the destruction of Damascus by the Assyrians. It belonged probably to the time of his direct distress, when he had sustained his double defeat (verse 5), had lost Elath (2 Kings 16: 6), and was attacked by the Edomites and Philistines (verses 17, 18). Which smote him; i.e., "which he believed to have smitten him." — *Cook*.

were the ruin¹ of him, and of all Israel.

24 And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up² the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

25 And in every³ several city of

Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers.

26 ¶ Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. —

27 And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the

¹ Isa. 1: 28. Hos. 13: 9. ² ch. 29: 3, 7. ³ Jer. 11: 13.

They were the ruin of him . . . of all Israel. The judgments which the Assyrians were commissioned by God to inflict upon Judah are regarded by the historian as peculiarly the effect of the idolatry of Ahaz. — *Keil*. After his visit to Damascus (see 2 Kings 16: 10), Ahaz caused certain changes to be made in the arrangements of the temple at Jerusalem, which were of greater or less significance. The record mentions some of these very briefly, but speaks more at length of those which affected the altar of burnt-offering, because these were by far the most important. (In regard to this altar see under verse 19.)

24. Cut in pieces the vessels; i.e., as is stated more precisely in 2 Kings 16: 17, he broke out the sides of the bases, removed the lavers from them, transferred the sea from the brazen oxen to a stone pavement, &c. (See 2 Kings 16: 17, 18.) The writer of Kings describes only a small portion of the work of destruction, which from Chronicles appears to have been general. — *Cook*. Shut up the doors. The temple worship was suspended, the lamps put out, and the doors shut, to prevent the priests from entering. (See ch. 29: 3-7.) The Jews still celebrate a yearly fast in commemoration of this time of affliction. — *Cook*. Made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. We must not forget that Ahaz did not do all at once, but went on from step to step in his apostacy. As it is certain that he did not begin with the sacrifice of his son in the valley of Hinnom, so it is certain also that he did not commence by closing the doors of the temple: on the contrary, these were the extremes to which he allowed himself to be driven under the influence of the heathen party. — *Lange*.

25. In every several city. In every separate city, one or more high places in each city. High places. From the earliest times it seems to have been customary to erect altars and offer sacrifices on lofty and conspicuous spots, because it was fancied that the hill-tops were nearer heaven, and so better places for worship. To burn incense. The burning of incense was a common religious practice among ancient nations. The Egyptians burnt incense to the sun, of three several kinds. The Babylonians burnt a thousand talents' weight of frankincense once a year to Bel. The Israelites are frequently reproached with burning incense to false gods by the prophets. — *Cook*.

26. The rest of his acts. Among other recorded acts of Ahaz are his proud and faithless refusal of a "sign," when God by the mouth of Isaiah bade him ask for one (Isa. 7: 10-13). — *Cook*. In the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. (Compare 2 Kings 16: 19.) This would appear to have been a compilation from the two histories constantly mentioned in Kings, — the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, and the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah, which it had been found convenient to unite into one. It is clearly not the "Book of Kings" of the sacred canon, since it contained the deeds of the monarchs "first and last," "all their wars, and all their ways," and since it is quoted for facts and utterances which are not contained in our present book of Kings. — *Cook*.

27. They buried him in Jerusalem, &c. The proper place of interment was in Jerusalem. There in some appointed receptacle, the remains of their princes were deposited; and from the circumstance of this being the cemetery for successive rulers, it was said, when one died and was so buried, that he was "gathered to his fathers." Several instances occur in the history of the Kings of Israel, wherein, on certain accounts, they were not thus interred with their predecessors, but in some other place in Jerusalem. So it was with Ahaz, who, though brought into the city, was not buried in the sepulchres of the kings. — *Burder*. For a king to be refused a place in the royal sepulchre was a great dishonor; and this was as far, generally, as the Hebrews cared to go in their judgment upon their dead princes. That which would have been a great honor to a subject — to find a grave in the city — was a sufficient disgrace to a king, unless his remains were also deposited in

... Henry has been a prodigal...
... from the dominion of God bring sin...
... a man or a nation...

city, even in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres | of the kings of Israel: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

the sepulchre of his fathers. To exclude him from burial in the city altogether would have been a frightful ignominy. The reader of the history of the kings will do well to note the difference as to the modes of their burial. It is always indicated, and that clearly for the very purpose of intimating the final public judgment on the character of the deceased king. — *Kittó*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord (verse 22). A man being sick and like to die, the physician, knowing his case, takes with him some preservative to comfort him, and coming to the door falls a-knocking. Now, if he either will not or be not able to let him in, he must of necessity perish; and the cause cannot properly lie at the physician's door, who was ready and willing to give relief. Thus it is that sin is a disease; whereof we are all sick: we have all sinned. Now, Christ is the great physician of our souls. He came down formerly from heaven to heal us; and he comes down daily to the door of our hearts, and there he knocks. He bringeth with him the bread of life, his eternal word to comfort us; and if we but open the door of our hearts he will come in and sup with us as he did with Mary, and forgive all our sins; but if we will not let him in, or through long contagion of sin be not able to let him in, we must of necessity die in our sins, not because he doth not offer grace, but because we receive it not. — *Spencer*.

II. They were the ruin of him and of all Israel (verse 23). I do not know why it is, that by the constitution of the universe evil has so much more power than good to produce its effect, and to propagate its nature. One drop of foul will pollute a whole cup of fair water; but one drop of fair water has no power to appreciably improve a cup of foul. — *Boyd*.

III. Cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God (verse 24). Dionysius the tyrant, entering into a temple of idols, took away from the chiefest amongst them a cloak of gold; and, being demanded why he did it, his answer was, "This cloak is too heavy for the summer and too cold for winter." Taking likewise a golden beard from Esculapius, he said that his father Apollo having no beard, there was no reason his son should wear any. But this was but a mask for his covetousness. And thus it is with some in these days: they will strip the Church of her maintenance, to keep the clergy from laziness; and they tell us that the king's daughter is all glorious within, so as they may pocket up her raiments of needlework and fine gold, it is no matter how she is without. — *Spencer*.

IV. Shut up the doors of the house of the Lord (verse 24). There are men who imagine they should do well enough if they could throw the Bible overboard and the ministers after it, and sink the whole church in the sea. It is as if a man with a shattered limb should think to better himself by thrusting the doctors and their instruments out of doors. They did not break his leg, but only propose to set it. — *Beecher*.

V. They brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings. The Egyptians had a custom in some measure similar to this: it was, however, general as to all persons, though it received very particular attention as far as it concerned their kings. It is thus described: As soon as a man was dead, he was brought to his trial. The public accuser was heard. If he proved that the deceased had led a bad life, his memory was condemned, and he was deprived of the honors of sepulture. Thus that sage people were affected with laws that extended even beyond the grave; and every one, struck with the disgrace inflicted on the dead person, was afraid to reflect dishonor on his own memory and that of his family. The sovereign himself was not exempted from this public inquest upon his death. Even some of them were not ranked among the *honored dead*, and consequently were deprived of public burial. — *Burder*.

VI. See also Dickens's Christmas Stories, and the chains of ledgers, &c., that bound Scrooge. And Shakespeare's Richard III., Act V., Scene 3: "Let me sit heavy on thy soul to-morrow."

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 19.) Sin always brings a nation or an individual low.
2. (Verses 20, 21.) If a prodigal forsake his father's house, he soon becomes a slave to the worst of masters. — *Henry*.
3. The friendship and help which is bought with silver and gold has no duration and no value. — *Cramer*.
4. He who seeks help in trouble from sin and sinners will find that they will "distress him, and help him not."
5. (Verse 22.) Trouble makes the unrepentant still worse. God's punishments harden, and not soften, his heart.

6. The tree of sin bears much fruit, and the worst fruit is more and more sin.
 7. (Verse 23.) They whose hearts condemn them will go any whither in a day of distress, rather than to God. — *Henry*.
 8. Departure from God, to serve self and sin, ruins men and their families.
 9. (Verse 24.) Those will soon come to make nothing of God, that will not be content to make him their all. — *Henry*.
 10. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? Whosoever destroyeth the temple of God, him will God destroy. — *Paul*.
 11. Wherever God has a church, the Devil builds a temple by the side of it. — *Henry*.
 12. One-half the pains men take in vain to succeed by sin would give them full success in serving the Lord.
 13. (Verse 26.) All our actions are recorded in God's book.
 14. (Verse 27.) Those who will not keep company with the good in life shall be separated from them in death.

LESSON X. — MARCH 10, 1878.

HEZEKIAH'S GOOD REIGN. — 2 CHRON. 29: 1-11.

TIME. Hezekiah reigned B. C. 726-698.

PLACE. Jerusalem, capital of Judah.

RULERS. Hezekiah, king of Judah; Hoshea, king of Israel till 721, when the kingdom of Israel was overthrown, and the people carried away captive, by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria.

PROPHETS. Nahum begins, and Isaiah and Micah continue to prophesy, Isaiah very prominently during the reign of Hezekiah.

Read in connection, 2 Kings 18: 1-13; 2 Chron. chs. 29-31.

THE CONNECTION.

Hezekiah, the 13th king of Judah, succeeded his father Ahaz in the third year of Hoshea, the 19th and last king of Israel. In the very first year, perhaps, of his reign, he began the reformation of religion by re-opening and repairing the doors of the temple, which had been closed by Ahaz. His character is marked by the commendation which has not been repeated since Jehoshaphat, "He did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done." The re-union of the people in the fear of God infused new life into their national policy. The Philistines, who had made such inroads during the last reign, were beaten back again as far as Gaza with great slaughter. Trusting in God's protection, Hezekiah even ventured to refuse the tribute which his father had paid to the king of Assyria. — *Smith*. The reign of Hezekiah is the culminating point of interest in the history of the kings of Judah. He was the centre of the highest prophetic influence which had appeared since Elijah. Isaiah was his constant counsellor. He was himself a poet (Isa. 38: 9-20). He gives the first distinct example of an attempt to collect the sacred books of his country. By his orders a large part (Prov. 25: 1) of the Proverbs of Solomon — to which Jewish tradition adds the prophecies of Isaiah, the book of Ecclesiastes, and the Canticles — were written out and preserved. The Psalms of David (2 Chron. 29: 25-31), and of Asaph the seer, the musical services prescribed by David and by David's two attendant prophets, Gad and Nathan, were revived by him. The services of the temple, and the instructions established by Jehoshaphat, were restored. The palace at Jerusalem was a storehouse of gold, silver, and jewels; the porch of the palace was once more hung with splendid shields (2 Chron. 32: 27). Even in the enmities which he introduced into the temple, he spared all the astrological (2 Kings 23: 12) altars and foreign curiosities which Ahaz had erected. Both in the capital and the country, he promoted the arts of peace, like his ancestor Uzziah. Towers and enclosures sprang up for the vast herds and flocks of the pastoral districts. The vineyards, olive-yards, and cornfields were again cultivated. The towers and fortifications of Jerusalem, the supply of water to the town, both by aqueduct from without and by a reservoir hewn out of the solid rock, were for centuries connected with his name. "Peace and truth" were the watchwords of his reign. When the merits of the kings were summed up after the fall of the monarchy, Hezekiah was, by a deliberate judgment, put at the very top. — *Stanley*.

1 Hezekiah¹ began to reign *when he was five and twenty years old*, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.²

2 And he did *that which was right* in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.

3 ¶ He in the first³ year of his reign, in the first month, opened⁴ the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.

4 And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street,

5 And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify⁵ now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the

¹ 2 Kings 18: 1, &c. ² ch. 26: 5. ³ Ps. 101: 3. Gal. 1: 16. ⁴ ver. 7. ⁵ ch. 35: 6. 1 Chron. 15: 12.

EXPLANATORY.

1. **Hezekiah began to reign.** The history of Hezekiah's reign given in Chronicles stands in marked contrast with the corresponding portion of Kings. While the writer of Kings fixes his eye mainly on civil affairs, on the two invasions of Sennacherib, and on the embassy of Merodach-baladan, which he relates at length, passing lightly and hastily over Hezekiah's religious reformation, the author of Chronicles sets himself to give a full account of the latter, which he does in three chapters, compressing into the compass of one the whole that he has to say of the civil history of the reign. — *Cook.* **Five and twenty years old.** It has been observed that this statement, combined with that of 2 Kings 18: 2, that Ahaz was only 20 at his accession, and reigned but 16 years, would make it necessary that Ahaz should have been married at the age of 10, and have had a child born to him when he was 11. Bochart and Keil have perhaps shown that this is not impossible; but its improbability is so great that most suggest a corruption of some of the numbers. — *Cook.* **His mother's name Abijah,** which in 2 Kings 18: 2 appears in an abridged form, Abi, is here given in full. Nothing further is known of her. **The daughter of Zechariah.** Stanley says that this Zechariah may have been the favorite prophet of Uzziah (ch. 26: 5), but others think that more likely he was the "faithful witness" of Isaiah (Isa. 8: 2).

2. **Right in the sight of the Lord.** All that is truly right must be *right in the sight of the Lord*, who sees the inmost heart and motives, and knows not only what *seems* right, but is right. Many a wrong may seem right in the sight of man. **According to all that David had done.** Some of his predecessors did right, it is said, but not like David, it is added; but "here was one who had as hearty an affection for the ark and the law of God as ever David had."

3. **In the first month.** The month Nisan (answering to our April, or rather part of March, and part of April), the first of the Jewish sacred year; perhaps, but not necessarily, the first month of Hezekiah's reign. Hezekiah began this effort in reform immediately after ascending the throne. Doubtless his soul had been crying out through more than one tedious year, under the awful wickedness of his father's reign, longing for the time to come when he might strike for the salvation of his country and the recall of the people from their idolatrous abominations. So, when at length he came to the throne of Judah, his heart was ready, his hand was ready, for this first great measure of his reign. — *Cowles.* **Opened the doors of the house of the Lord.** Which had been closed up by his father Ahaz (ch. 28: 24). By this he opened the whole temple for the worship of God. **And repaired them.** Literally, "*made them strong.*" From 2 Kings it appears that the repairs now made included the plating of the doors, wholly or in part, with gold. — *Cook.*

4. **Brought in the priests and the Levites.** The priests had the whole care of the sacrifices and religious services of the temple. All the priests were Levites, that is, descendants of Levi, through Gershom and Aaron. The Levites were the descendants of Levi's other children. They assisted the priests, formed the guard of the tabernacle, and conveyed it from place to place. In David's time, they were divided into three classes, each subdivided into 24 courses. The first class attended upon the priests, the second formed the choir of singers, the third acted as porters and guards in the temple and at the gates. They were probably also the instructors of the people. They were the learned class. — *Angus.* **Gathered them.** First he summoned together the priests and the Levites, for these men must be his chief agents in a revival to be worked by the instrumentalities of the Mosaic institutions. In few but telling words, he sets the case before them. — *Cowles.* **The east street.** The court of the priests, which fronted the eastern gate of the temple. — *J. F. and D.*

5. **Sanctify now yourselves.** Elsewhere in similar commands we find acts of purification and

LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy¹ place.

6 For² our fathers have trespassed, and done *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and³ have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned *their backs*.

7 Also they have shut up⁴ the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel.

8 Wherefore⁵ the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing,⁶ as ye see with your eyes.

¹ Ezek. 8: 3, 9, &c. ² Neh. 9: 16. ³ Jer. 2: 27. ⁴ Ezek. 8: 16. ⁵ ver. 8. ch. 28: 24. Mal. 1: 10. ⁶ ch. 24: 18. ⁷ 1 Kings 9: 8. Jer. 18: 15, 16; 25: 9, 18.

abstinence enjoined. The word itself means simply bodily purity; and, as washing was the preparation for each religious service, the term came to signify "to set apart," and as so used is rendered in our Bibles, "to consecrate," or "sanctify;" so that the charge meant virtually this, "Set yourselves apart to God." — *Sarah F. Smiley*. To sanctify is to make holy; for the only way in which we can become holy is to set ourselves apart to God. This act is clearly allied to faith. David ascribed the calamity which hindered his first attempt at bringing the ark up into Zion, to the fact that those who conducted it had not sanctified themselves; and afterwards, when he was about to complete the removal, he required the priests and Levites who took part in the ceremony first of all to "sanctify themselves" (1 Chron. 15: 12, 13). Hezekiah follows this example, knowing, probably, that the priests had in the preceding time of idolatry contracted many defilements. — *Cook*. No one can well serve God in bringing others back to God, till he becomes sanctified himself. **Carry forth the filthiness.** It might consist in part of mere dust or dirt, in part of idolatrous objects introduced by Ahaz before he finally shut up the temple. — *Cook*. So, too, must we cast out all idols and all filthiness from the temple of our hearts.

6. For our fathers have trespassed. Ahaz and the generation contemporary with him were specially meant, for "they turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord," and they abandoned the worship of God. "They shut up the doors of the porch," so that the sacred ritual was entirely discontinued. **Habitation of the Lord.** The temple, so called because Jehovah specially manifested himself there, not once or twice, but continually as one dwelling in his home. — *J. F. and B.* **Turned their backs.** Left the temple behind them as they went to worship idols. They despaired the dwelling-place of Jehovah.

7. Shut up the doors of the porch; and thus of the whole temple, for only through the porch in front of the temple was there access to the holy and most holy place. — *Lange*. **Put out the lamps.** The lamps of the golden candlestick described in 1 Kings 7: 49. Exod. 25: 31-37; 37: 17-24. It consisted of a base or shaft with seven branches, three on each side and one in the middle. These branches were all parallel to one another, and were worked out in bowls, knobs, and flowers. On the extremity of each branch was a golden lamp, whose light was supplied by pure olive-oil prepared in a peculiar way. This candlestick, which is affirmed by Josephus to have been hollow within, was wholly of pure gold, and weighed about 125 lbs. It was placed on the south or left-hand side of the holy place as one entered. They were kept continually burning. — *Bush*. (There were ten of these candlesticks in Solomon's temple, five on the right and five on the left.) **Incense.** See Lesson VIII., note on verse 16. Nothing forbids us to consider the prayers and devotions of the saints as symbolically represented by the incense of the golden altar. As the daily sacrifice represented the perpetual efficacy of Christ's atonement, so the burning of incense morning and evening typified his continual intercession for us. — *Bush*. **Nor offered burnt offerings.** The old altar of burnt sacrifices had been removed by Ahaz, to make room for the new altar (see Lesson IX., on verse 19). To this Ahaz had devoted himself, offering morning and evening the usual offerings, until finally he seems to have gone so far in his apostasy as to give up all worship, and to close the house of the Lord altogether.

8. The wrath of the Lord. This pious king had the discernment to ascribe all the national calamities that had befallen the kingdom to the true cause; viz., apostasy from God. The country had been laid waste by successive wars of invasion, and its resources drained; many families mourned members of their household still suffering the miseries of foreign captivity; all their former prosperity and glory had fled; and to what was this painful and humiliating state of affairs to be traced, but the manifest judgment of God upon the kingdom for its sins? — *J. F. and B.* **Astonishment.** Their troubles were so great and so sudden as to overwhelm them with amazement. Even the lookers-on

9 For, lo, our fathers have fallen¹ by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives *are* in captivity for this.

10 Now *it is* in mine heart to make a covenant² with the LORD

God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.

11 My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense.

¹ ch. 28: 5, 8, &c. Lam. 5: 7. ² ch. 15: 12.

were astounded at the sight of the punishment God inflicted on them. So will it be with all sinners in the day of their punishment: they will be astonished at their folly in going on in sin, and at the terrible fruits of sin. **To hissing**; i.e., to scorn. All sin is mean and shameful; and when men see it as it is they will scorn themselves, and others will scorn them, for their baseness, folly, and meanness, in sinning against their good Father in heaven. **As ye see with your eyes.** This refers to the calamities which befell the people under Ahaz, the wars with the Syrians, Ephraimites, Philistines, and Edomites, and the oppression on the part of the Assyrians. — *Kell.* So, too, any one who will look will see all around him the dreadful fruits of sin.

9. Our fathers have fallen by the sword. See ch. 28: 5, 17, 18.

10. Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with God. Convinced of the sin and bitter fruits of idolatry, Hezekiah intended to reverse the policy of his father, and to restore, in all its ancient purity and glory, the worship of the true God. His commencement of this resolution at the beginning of his reign attests his sincere piety, and it also proves the strength of his conviction that righteousness exalteth a nation; for, instead of waiting till his throne was consolidated, he devised measures of national reformation at the beginning of his reign, and vigorously faced the difficulties which in such a course he had to encounter, after the people's habits had so long been moulded to idolatry. **Covenant.** An agreement. As the Ten Commandments are really the ten covenants, or agreements of God to bless on condition of obedience. Hezekiah agrees to serve God with all his heart, makes a promise, and then God's promises to the obedient come into force. **Wrath may turn away.** Only from the obedient can wrath turn away. By God's promise, and by the nature of things, evil must come upon evil-doers; and there is no possible escape but by turning away from sin.

11. My sons. To rulers, subordinates should be as children. They would do much more and much better as sons than as mere servants. **The Lord hath chosen you.** By birth and appointment. They had been turned out of office by Ahaz: now they return to the work for which God had chosen them. Everybody works best in the place and at the work for which God has chosen him. It is to find out what is the business our Father has for us to do, and then be not negligent in doing it. **Serve him.** In the temple service, by sacrifices, incense, and all the work of the temple. Fourteen chiefs undertook the duty of collecting and preparing their brethren for the important work of "cleansing the Lord's house." Beginning with the outer courts,—that of the priests and that of the people,—the cleansing of these occupied eight days, after which they set themselves to purify the interior; but, as the Levites were not allowed to enter within the walls of the temple, the priests brought all the sweepings out to the porch, where they were received by the Levites, and thrown into the brook Kedron. This took eight days more; and, at the end of this period, they repaired to the palace, and announced that not only had the whole of the sacred edifice, within and without, undergone a thorough purification, but all the vessels which the late king had taken away, and applied to a common use in his palace, had been restored "and sanctified." The requisite number of victims having been provided, the priests were appointed to offer sacrifices of atonement. Animals of the kinds used in sacrifice were offered by sevens,—that number indicating completeness. The Levites were ordered to praise God with musical instruments. At the close of the special services of the occasion, viz., the offering of atonement sacrifices, the king and all civic rulers who were present joined in the worship. A grand anthem was sung (verse 30) by the choir, consisting of some of the Psalms of David and Asaph; and a great number of thank-offerings, praise-offerings, and free-will burnt-offerings were presented at the invitation of the king.—*J. F. and B.* The people went along with the change, sudden as it was. Immediately on this followed the revival of the passover, of which no celebration had been recorded since the time of Joshua. From this restoration of the worship of Jehovah, Hezekiah proceeded to the removal of superstitions which had existed from the earliest times, the worship of the "high places;" with these was joined, within the walls of Jerusalem itself, the time-honored worship of the brazen serpent. It had been brought from Gibeon with the tabernacle; and before it, from early times, in

cense was offered up, as it would seem, by the northern as well as the southern kingd m. — *Stanley*. With a high degree of probability, Psalm 84 was composed and sent out with these Jewish missionaries, to be not only read but sung, to back up their warm-hearted invitations to their northern brethren to gather themselves at the holy city in those lovely tabernacles of the Lord of hosts. Several other Psalms of the third book may be read in connection with the age of Hezekiah; e.g., 75, 76, 80-82, and 85-89, came in well. Recalling to mind the fact that this great revival and this breaking down of idols in the northern kingdom preceded the invasion under Shalmaneser by only three years, and the total destruction of Samaria and the entire northern kingdom by not more than six years, we shall see reason to regard this as not only God's last call of mercy to thousands in the northern kingdom, but as his grand providential agency for sifting out his own chosen ones, gathering in all whom the most efficient agency could avail to save before the final storm should sweep the nation forever into ruin. — *Cowles*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Hezekiah's mother. Two friends had spent a pleasant hour together. At parting the visitor, a young mother, said, "We may not stay in our present home, for we want our little boy to have just the right kind of surroundings. Whatever we may be, I want him to grow into a noble man." The hostess replied in a gentle but earnest tone, "The only way to insure his being brought up right anywhere, Mrs. Campbell, is for his parents to be genuine Christians." Mrs. Campbell afterwards told me that "the only way" sounded in her ears all the way home. She knew it was true. — *Am. Messenger*.

II. In the first year of his reign . . . opened the doors of the house of the Lord (verse 3). First things first, so says common sense; but the one acquainted with all beings and interests in all worlds says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Seek citizenship and fellowship in that kingdom, becoming a friend of God and of his friends. A young man at Alfriston having embraced the gospel, and made open profession of it, his father, who was much offended, gave him this advice: "James, you should first get yourself established in a good trade, and then think of and determine about religion." — "Father," replied James, "Christ advises me very differently. He says, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added unto you.'" Seek the greater, and you will not fail of the less. Do the will of God, and God will take care of you. — *Seeds and Sheaves*.

III. Astonishment. There is a story of a man who was restored from the dead, and who afterwards kept saying, "They will not believe, they will not believe." Believe what? he was asked. Believe "how exactly God judgeth, how terribly God punisheth." And he might have added, "how wonderfully God forgiveth every one who will repent and return to him."

IV. Not only cleansing (verse 5), but teaching (verse 11). It is not the ploughing, it is not the sowing, but the seed, which insures a harvest. "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God." How can Christians expect any thing when they sow nothing, or when they sow something besides seed? I heard a minister of the gospel say that once his father gave him a small plat of ground, and told him he might cultivate and claim it as his garden. So he spaded and weeded, and raked the mellow soil, as he had seen other people do. He was in greatest perplexity what to do in the choice of a crop. Most things fall in dry seasons, and it would not do to waste time. At last his father told him turnips might be relied upon; and he gave all his pocket-money to purchase a bright yellow paper-full of seed from the grocery. Never were such straight furrows drawn with whip-cord; never were such holes punched with the table-steel, — five seeds in a hole was the rule of generous measure, — then the bell rang for dinner. Afterwards it was only needful to cover up, press down, sprinkle with water, and wait — this last, the hardest. But no crop. Two weeks came and went. The plat had "much water," but no shoots sprouted. Even the father said there was failure, and he had better dig up and try again; and the first stroke of the hoe at the border pulled out the whole unbroken paper of seed, yellow in the grass. He made every thing ready, thought he had done the rest, and covered up the empty holes. How could he have expected any thing when he put nothing in? — *Charles Robinson*.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 1.) A young man may become good, even though his father be bad. Grace can overcome all the disadvantages and difficulties of such parentage.

2. Hezekiah's mother is mentioned, because a good mother is the greatest power toward making a good son. Nothing else is known of her; but this is enough, to be the mother and have the training of so great and good a son.

3. In the worst of times God raises up good men to work a reformation.

4. (Verse 2.) All true goodness is such that is right in the sight of the Lord.

5. The good example of David lives ages after his death. Goodness is never buried in our graves.
6. (Verse 3.) **First year.** We should begin at once any reformation of ourselves, or of our kingdom, whatever it be. Delays only make more difficulty to be overcome.
7. **Open doors.** The first thing is, open the doors of the temple of our hearts, and let the waiting Jesus come in.
8. (Verse 5.) The workers, teachers, or preachers must first sanctify themselves, before they can do much toward making others holy.
9. **Carry forth filthiness.** Every idol, every sin, all uncleanness, must be cast out of our hearts, by repenting and forsaking, before we are fit for the service and the indwelling of God.
10. (Verse 6.) We must not follow the bad example of the nearest relatives or the greatest men.
11. We must confess and forsake all our sins.
12. (Verse 7.) Sinners do like Ahaz. (1) They put out the light of God's word. (2) They refuse to offer the incense of prayer. (3) They withhold the offerings of their hearts and lives and property.
13. (Verse 8.) **Astonishment.** Sinners will be astonished at their terrible punishment, and at their own folly in sinning.
14. **Hissing.** Sin is the meanest thing in God's universe.
15. (Verse 9.) No one can sin to himself alone: family, friends, others, are always injured by our sins.
16. (Verse 10.) We should make a covenant with God to serve him forever, and he will fulfil all his promises to us.

LESSON XI.—MARCH 17, 1878.

HEZEKIAH AND THE ASSYRIANS.—2 CHRON. 32: 9-21.

TIME. B. C. 699 or 698; the last year of Hezekiah's reign.

PLACE. Jerusalem, and south-western Judah.

RULERS. Hezekiah, king of Judah; Sennacherib, of Assyria; Numa Pompilius, in Rome, now half a century old; Apsander, the sixth of the Decennial Archons, in Greece.

PROPHETS. Isaiah, Micah.

Read in connection with the lesson, 2 Kings ch. 18: 13-37, and ch. 19; Isa. 10: 24-34; 14: 24-27; 17: 12-14; 33: 17-24; and chs. 36-38.

THE CONNECTION.

The last lesson was at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, and these events took place in his last, or 29th year. In his 14th year, B. C. 713, Sargon, the father of Sennacherib, sent an army against Judah and Egypt. Sennacherib his son, who began to reign B. C. 702, made another invasion of Judah and Egypt in 701, the 27th year of Hezekiah. This is described in 2 Kings 18: 13-16. There it is said, by some mistake of copyists, to have been in the 14th year of Hezekiah. But the monuments of Nineveh make it impossible to have been then, as Sennacherib was not king till 702, or 11 years later. (Others think that the name of Sennacherib has crept into 2 Kings 18: 13, and Isa. 36: 1, where it should have been simply, king of Assyria, meaning his father Sargon.) The account of this invasion (which was two years earlier than the one in the lesson) is given on the tablets of Nineveh, a copy of which is given in the "Illustrative." An account is given of his progress in Isa. 10: 28-32. When he drew near to Jerusalem, Hezekiah was so afraid that he paid him 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold, besides much other spoil. Hezekiah took the vessels of the temple and his palace, and cut off the gold from the doors which he had overlaid. (See last lesson.) Sennacherib returned to Nineveh with 200,000 captives, and great spoil. Then he fought against Babylon, and after two years returned to subdue Egypt and Judah, the account of which is contained in this lesson.

9 ¶ After this did Sennacherib | Jerusalem (but he *himself* laid siege
king of Assyria send his servants to | against Lachish, and all his power

EXPLANATORY.

9. After this. After the first expedition of Sennacherib, as described in the connection. Omitting, as well known, the account of Hezekiah's submission contained in 2 Kings 18: 14-16, the

with him), unto Hezekiah king of | at Jerusalem, saying,
Judah, and unto all Judah that were |

writer now proceeds to the great event of that king's reign, — the second expedition of Sennacherib, his impious threats, and his miraculous discomfiture. As this matter had been narrated in full by the writer of Kings, our author delivers it with great brevity, compressing into 13 verses the history which occupies in Kings a chapter and a half. — *Cook*. Sennacherib was the son and successor of Sargon. His name in the original is read as Tsin-akki-irib, which is understood to mean, 'Sin (or the moon) increases brothers;' an indication that he was not the first-born of his father. He reigned 22 years, beginning to reign B. C. 702. Sennacherib was one of the most magnificent of the Assyrian kings. He seems to have been the first who fixed the seat of government permanently at Nineveh, which he carefully repaired, and adorned with splendid buildings. His greatest work is the grand palace at Koyunjik, which covered a space of above eight acres, and was adorned throughout with sculpture of finished execution. Of his death nothing is known beyond the brief statement of Scripture, that as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, smote him with the sword, and escaped into the land of Armenia. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. His grandeur is attested not merely by the details of the cuneiform inscriptions, but by the splendor of the palace, which, with its magnificent entrances and chambers, occupies a quarter of Nineveh, and by the allusions to his conquests in all the fragments of ancient history that contain any memorial of those times. With a pride of style peculiar to himself, he claims the titles of "the great, the powerful king; the king of the Assyrians, of the nations, of the four regions; the diligent ruler, the favorite of the great gods, the observer of sworn faith, the guardian of law, the establisher of monuments, the noble hero, the strong warrior, the first of kings, the punisher of unbelievers, the destroyer of wicked men." Such was the king who for many years filled the horizon of the Jewish world. — *Stanley*. Assyria. Assyria was a great and powerful country lying on the Tigris, the capital of which was Nineveh. The boundaries of Assyria differed greatly at different periods. It came at last to be regarded as comprising the whole region between the Armenian mountains (latitude 37° 30') upon the north, and upon the south the country about Bagdad (latitude 33° 30'). Eastward its boundary was the high range Zagros, or mountains of Kurdistan; westward it was, according to the views of some, bounded by the Mesopotamian desert, while, according to others, it reached the Euphrates. Taking the greatest of these dimensions, Assyria may be said to have extended in a direction from north-east to south-west, a distance of nearly 500 miles, with a width varying from 350 to 100 miles. Its area would thus a little exceed 100,000 square miles, or about equal that of Italy. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. It is from the ruins of Assyria, and principally from those of Nineveh its capital, that we learn the most about its history. Huge mounds, apparently of mere earth and rubbish, covered its site. The first accurate description and plan of these ruins was given by Claudius James Rich, an agent of the English East India Company. In 1843 M. Paul Botta, French consul at Mosul, laid bare in one of the mounds a magnificent palace, which had evidently been destroyed by fire. He found among the remains a series of apartments panelled with slabs of coarse gray alabaster, on which were sculptured in bas-relief figures of men and animals, with inscriptions in the cuneiform or arrow-headed characters which were their alphabet. In 1847 Henry Layard, an English traveller, discovered immense quantities of sculptures, inscriptions, pottery, and antiquities of all sorts, by means of which more light has been thrown on the history and civilization of the Assyrians than by all the accounts transmitted to us by the writers of antiquity. Many palaces were discovered, among them the one built by Sennacherib himself. The walls of these buildings were lined with sculptured alabaster slabs from 8 to 10 feet high, from 3 to 4 feet broad, and about 18 inches thick. On the sculptured figures were inscriptions recording the exploits of the king by whom the building was erected. These edifices were great national monuments, upon the walls of which were represented in sculpture, or inscribed in alphabetical characters, the chronicles of the empire. He who entered them might thus read the history, and learn the glories and triumphs, of the nation. The latest explorer of Nineveh, George Smith, of the British Museum, was probably the first visitor to the ruins who could read the inscriptions. His researches resulted in the collection of nearly 3,000 tablets or fragments of tablets, of inscriptions, including among the fragments those of the Chaldean account of the deluge, deciphered by him in 1872, from broken tablets in the British Museum. — *American Cyclopædia*. Send his servants. See 2 Kings 18: 17. Tartan, or General; Rabaris, the chief of the eunuchs; and Rab-shakeh, the chief cup-bearer: these being the offices which their names imply, with a great host. None of these are proper names. Tartan was the ordinary title of an Assyrian general. They were to demand the unconditional surrender of the king and capital. — *Cook*. To Jerusalem. Sennacherib was encamped before Lachish, 30 miles south-west of

10 Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege in Jerusalem?

11 Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves to die by famine and by thirst, saying, The LORD our God shall deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

12 Hath not the same Hezekiah

taken away his high places and his altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall worship before one altar, and burn incense upon it?

13 Know ye not what I and my fathers have done¹ unto all the people of other lands? were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able to deliver their lands out of mine hand?

¹ Isa. 10: 14. Dan. 5: 19.

Jerusalem, seated in state, as we see him in the monuments, on his sculptured throne, his bow and arrows in his hand, his chariots and horses of regal pomp behind him, the prisoners bending before him, half clothed and barefoot, from the captured city. From this proud position he sent a large detachment to Jerusalem. They took up their position on the north of the city, on a spot long afterwards known as the camp of the Assyrians. Hezekiah feared to appear; or perhaps, as Cook suggests, careful of his dignity, he sent officers of his court, who were nearer the rank of those sent. In his place came Eliakim, now chief minister; Shebna, now in the office of secretary; and Joah, the royal historian. The chief cup-bearer was the spokesman. He spoke in Hebrew. The Jewish chiefs entreated him to speak in his own Aramaic; but his purpose was directly to address the spectators, as they sat on the houses along the city wall, and his speech breathes the spirit which pervades all the representations of Assyrian power. — *Stanley*. Laid siege against Lachish. Rather, "was near Lachish." — *Cook*. Lachish was an ancient royal city of the Canaanites, in the plain of Philistia, bordering on the mountains of Judah, in the south-western part of its territory, 30 miles from Jerusalem. It was captured by Joshua, fortified by Rehoboam; King Amaziah was killed there. The city was probably taken by Sennacherib. It is mentioned in Jer. 34: 7; Mic. 1: 13. On the tablets and sculptures discovered by Mr. Layard in the palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh, there is a description of the siege of Lachish. Above the king's head is the following inscription in cuneiform characters: "Sennacherib, the mighty king, king of the country of Assyria, sitting on the throne of judgment before the city of Lachish. I give permission for its slaughter." Modern research presents this as one of the most important confirmations of Scripture history. — *Whitney*. All his power. All his army and their equipments.

10. Whereon do ye trust? Literally, "Whereon are ye trusting and sitting in restraint?" — *Lange*. Judah was in alliance with Egypt, Assyria's arch-enemy; and reference is here made to this. In Kings 18: 21, Egypt is mentioned by name. It was an alliance fraught with danger to the Jewish commonwealth. The policy of the Egyptian kings would have been to use the warlike little state as an outpost to sustain the first shock of the enemy before he entered the Delta. Their "strength was to sit still," and sacrifice their weaker neighbor. The tall reed of the Nile-bulrush would only pierce the hand of him that leaned upon it. Isaiah began the course of protests against the alliance, which was taken up by all the subsequent prophets. — *Stanley*.

11. Hezekiah persuade you. Rab-shakeh spoke in Hebrew to the people, to persuade them to compel Hezekiah to surrender.

12. Taken away his high places . . . his altars. As Rab-shakeh did not know the requirements of the Jewish law, it might seem to him naturally enough that the destruction of numerous shrines and altars where Jehovah had been worshipped was conduct calculated not to secure the favor, but to call forth the anger, of the god. At any rate, it was conduct which he knew had been distasteful to many of Hezekiah's subjects, and an allusion to it might serve the cause of his master by causing dissensions among his enemies. — *Cook*. One altar. This reason given by an enemy was the very reason, as is so often the case, why God was with them to make them strong.

13. Know ye not what I and my fathers have done? The insolent tone he assumed appears surprising. But this boasting, both as to matter and manner, his highly-colored picture of his master's powers and resources, and the impossibility of Hezekiah making any effective resistance heightened by all the arguments and figures which an Oriental imagination could suggest, has been paralleled in all, except the blasphemy, by other messages of defiance sent on similar occasions in the history of the East. — *J. F. and B.*

14 Who *was there* among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of mine hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand?

15 Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him: for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand, and out of the hand of my fathers: how much¹ less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand?

16 And his servants spake yet

more against the LORD God, and against his servant Hezekiah.

17 He wrote also letters² to rail on the LORD God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, As the gods of the nations of *other lands* have not delivered their people out of mine hand, so shall not the God of Hezekiah deliver his people out of mine hand.

18. Then they cried with a loud voice in the Jews' speech unto the people of Jerusalem that *were* on the wall, to affright³ them, and to trouble them; that they might take the city.

¹ Dan. 3: 15. ² 2 Kings 19: 9, &c. ³ Neh. 6: 9.

14. That your God should be able to deliver. This boast is natural. The Assyrians had had an uninterrupted career of success, and might well believe that their gods were more powerful than those of the nations with whom they had warred. Nor was there any thing in the history of the Jews, so far as they knew it, to induce them to separate this people in their minds from others. They had utterly overrun and destroyed the kindred tribes of Galilee, Gilead, and Samaria. They had for years exercised lordship over Judæa; and, on the recent occasion of a rebellion, they had easily enforced submission, and the very king who now defied them had purchased his safety by the payment of a heavy fine. It is not surprising that they did not understand that their successes hitherto had been allowed by the very God, Jehovah, against whom they were now boasting themselves. Compare Isa. 10: 5-19. — Cook.

16. Against Hezekiah. Poor Hezekiah is abused most vilely, and overwhelmed with scorn and insult; while the material advantages to be realized by submission are studiously placed before the eyes of the people (2 Kings 18: 31, 32). The dignity of independence, the pride of nationality, were of small account in the eyes of these Assyrians. The language used was indeed so insulting and blasphemous that Hezekiah conceived from it that the Lord himself would hear and avenge his own cause; and, encouraged by the prophets, he gathered confidence from that which seemed calculated to intimidate him. — Kitto.

17. He wrote also letters. Or "a letter," as in 2 Kings 19: 14. The plural form of the word seems to be used sometimes of a single document. — Cook. The king took the letter, and, having read it, went at once to the house of the Lord, spread out the letter, as it were, before him, and poured out his soul in earnest prayer. No sooner did he cast himself in entire confidence upon the Lord's protection, than his heart was cheered by the promise of a great deliverance. — Kitto. See 2 Kings 19: 15-35; Isa. 33: 4, 5; 10: 14, 33, 34. Compare Ezek. 31: 3-6; 33: 18.

18. Then they cried with a loud voice. The allusion is to the fact narrated in 2 Kings 18: 28-33, which occurred *before* Sennacherib wrote his letter. — Cook. Jew's speech (i.e., in the Hebrew language) unto the people . . . on the wall. In no state of society can the law of nations have permitted an appeal of this kind, — an appeal from the government to the people, from the commander to the common soldiery. But the Assyrians in their intense pride scorned to be bound by ordinary usage. The conference must have been held immediately outside the wall, for the words of the speakers to have been audible. — *Ibid.* To affright them, &c. This assignment of motive is additional to the narrative in Kings, but harmonizes well with it. Rab-shakeh and his companions were accompanied by a strong body of troops. If a tumult had arisen among the Jews who manned the walls a gate might perhaps have been opened, and the Assyrians have been received into the town. — Cook. It was a day of awful suspense. In proportion to the strength of Isaiah's confidence and of Hezekiah's devotion, would have been the ruin of the Jewish church and faith, if they had been disappointed of their hope. It was a day of suspense also for the two great armies which were drawing near to their encounter on the confines of Palestine. Like Anianus in the siege of Orleans, Hezekiah must have looked southward and westward with ever keener and keener eagerness. For already there was a rumor that Tirhakah

19. And¹ they spake against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth, *which were* the work of the hands of man.

20 And² for this *cause* Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed³ and cried to heaven.

21 ¶ And⁴ the Lord sent an angel,⁵ which cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword.

¹ 1 Sam. 17: 33. Jo⁶ 15: 23, 26. Ps. 10: 13, 14; 73: 8-11; 133: 1, 20. ² Isa. 37: 1, &c. ³ Ps. 50: 15; 91: 14, 15. ⁴ Isa. 10: 16-18; 42: 8. ⁵ 2 Sam. 21: 16. Ps. 18: 53. Dan. 3: 28; 6: 22.

the king of Egypt was on his way to the rescue. Already Sennacherib had heard the rumor; and it was this which precipitated his endeavor to intimidate Jerusalem into submission. — *Stanley*.

19. Against God, as against the gods of the people. These Assyrians had no conception of the difference. They did not know the power of the true God; and the conduct of this people two years before gave them reason so to think, for God could not bless a people who did not trust in him. The world is always imagining that Christianity has no other power than that of the worldly religions.

21. The Lord sent an angel. The word *angel* means properly one sent, a messenger of God, and is applied to an angel, and often to a prophet. The word may be applied to any messenger sent from God, whoever or whatever that may be. Thus in Ps. 104: 4 the winds are said to be his angels or messengers. Whatever were the means used in the destruction of the Assyrian army, there is no improbability in the opinion that they were under the direction of a celestial agent sent forth to accomplish the purpose. The use of the word "angel" does not determine the manner in which it was done. So far as the word is concerned, it might have been accomplished either by the power of an invisible messenger of God, a spiritual being commissioned for this purpose; or it might have been by some second causes under the direction of an angel; or it might have been by some agents sent by God, — whatever they were, the storm, the pestilence, or the simoom, — to which the name "angel" might have been applied. — *Barnes*. How is this to be understood? Not, surely, as Dr. Johnson remarked, "that an angel went about with a sword in his hand, stabbing them one by one." Either some terrible known agency, such as that of the pestilence or the hot poisonous wind, was employed, or some extraordinary and unknown operation took place. In either case, the divine power is equally manifested; and assuredly nothing could be easier than for that power to extinguish so frail a thing as the life of man at a stroke. The tens of thousands were but an aggregate of individuals, whose breath was in their nostrils. Berosus says it was a pestilence. — *Kittó*. Cut off all the mighty men of valor. From 2 Kings 19: 35, we learn that the number destroyed was 185,000. Here we have the additional information that the loss was especially among the officers and troops of superior quality. The Assyrian kings do not often mention the size of their armies. Where such mention occurs, the numbers are usually between 100,000 and 200,000. — *Cook*. The great moral lessons of this event are embalmed in song in Ps. 76 (also Ps. 46, perhaps also Ps. 48 and 75). This manifestation of God's high hand against proud Assyria was a fit sequel to the glorious reformation in the first year of Hezekiah's reign. The way was opened legitimately for such prayer as God could hear, and with honor to himself could answer in overwhelming judgments on his foes. — *Cowles*. So he returned, — to his capital at Nineveh, and soon after invaded Babylon and other countries. He lived 17 years after this. The house of his god. In Kings "the house of Nisroch." Nisroch has not as yet been identified with any known Assyrian deity. The name in the Hebrew text is somewhat doubtful. The word *may* not be the name of a god at all, but the name of the temple. Assyrian temples were almost all distinguished by special names. The translation should then run, "As he was worshipping his god in the house Nisroch." — *Cook*. They that came forth of his own bowels, i.e., his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer (2 Kings 19: 37), 17 years after the date of this lesson, slew their father while he was worshipping in the temple, in order to ascend his throne; but after a few months, Esar-haddon, another son, became the successor of Sennacherib.

For fuller accounts read Rawlinson's "Five Monarchies," vol. ii., the second monarchy; William Smith's "Student's Old Testament History;" Stanley's "Jewish Church," vol. ii.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Invasion of Sennacherib. It is interesting to find in the annals of Sennacherib a full account of this campaign. "And because Hezekiah, king of Judah," says Sennacherib, "would not

submit to my yoke, I came up against him, and by force of arms, and by the might of my power, I took *forty-six of his strong fenced cities*; and of the smaller towns which were scattered about I took and plundered a countless number. And from these places I captured and carried off as spoil 200,150 people, old and young, male and female, together with horses and mares, asses and camels, oxen and sheep, a countless multitude. And Hezekiah himself I shut up in Jerusalem, his capital city, like a bird in a cage, building towers round the city to hem him in, and raising banks of earth against the gates, so as to prevent escape. . . . Then upon this Hezekiah there fell the fear of the power of my arms; and he sent out to me the chiefs and the elders of Jerusalem, *with thirty talents of gold* and eight hundred talents of silver, and divers treasures, a rich and immense booty. . . . All these things were brought to me at Nineveh, the seat of my government, Hezekiah having sent them by way of tribute, and as a token of his submission to my power." It is needless, however, to particularize the points of agreement between these narratives. The only discrepancy is in the amount of silver which Sennacherib received. Layard, however, suggests that the Bible may only include the actual amount of money in the three hundred talents of silver, whilst the Assyrian records comprise *all the precious metals taken away*." — *Rawlinson's Bampton Lectures*.

II. And the Lord sent an angel (verse 21).

"The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen.
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed.
.

And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmeared by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord."

BYRON.

III. It is not without reason, that, in the churches of Moscow, the exultation over the fall of Sennacherib is still read on the anniversary of the retreat of the French from Russia. — *Stanley*. Earthly states had never reached a prouder pinnacle than when Napoleon, in June, 1812, gathered his army at Dresden, — that mighty host, unequalled in all time, of 450,000, not men merely, but effective soldiers, — and there received the homage of subject kings. And now, what was the principal adversary of this tremendous power? By whom was it checked and resisted, and put down? By none, and by nothing, but the direct and manifest interposition of God. I know of no language so well fitted to describe that victorious advance to Moscow, and the utter humiliation of the retreat, as the language of the prophet with respect to the advance and subsequent destruction of the host of Sennacherib. "When they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses," applies almost literally to that memorable night of frost in which twenty thousand horses perished, and the strength of the French army was utterly broken. Human instruments no doubt were employed in the remainder of the work; nor would I deny to Germany and to Prussia the glories of that great year 1813, nor to England the honor of her victories in Spain or of the crowning victory of Waterloo. But, at the distance of thirty years, those who lived in the time of danger, and remember its magnitude, and now calmly review what there was in human strength to avert it, must acknowledge, I think, beyond all controversy, that the deliverance of Europe from the dominion of Napoleon was effected, neither by Russia, nor by Germany, nor by England, but by the hand of God alone. — *Thomas Arnold*.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verses 9, 10.) Satan in his temptations aims to destroy our faith in God's all-sufficiency, knowing that he gains his point if he can do that, as we keep our ground if our faith fail not. — *Henry*.

2. (Verse 11.) The wicked cannot understand what is the real strength and hope of the Christian. He thinks he has "famine and thirst," and is shut up within narrow limits, whereas, with God on his side, he has bread of life and living waters and freedom.

3. (Verse 12.) Hezekiah's obliging the people to worship at one altar is one of the best deeds he ever did. If that be represented by malicious men as evil, which is really good and pleasing to God, we must not think it strange.

4. (Verse 13.) He endeavors to make them believe it would be for their advantage to surrender. Gild the chain, and the vulgar will let you bind them. — *Henry*.

5. *None deliver them.* It would be well if sinners would submit to the force of this argument in making their peace with God; that it is therefore our wisdom to yield to him, because it is vain to contend with him. — *Henry*.

6. (Verse 15.) Because other religions have failed to satisfy the soul, therefore men imagine that Jesus Christ is as weak a saviour as they.

7. (Verse 16.) Wicked men love to speak evil of God and the church, and bear false witness against them, lest their own evil deeds be reproved.

8. To affright them (verse 18). Wicked men often object to the use of the *fear of God*, which is noble and wise, as a motive to be good; but they continually appeal to the *fear of man*, which is base, to keep others from the service of God.

9. Cried to heaven (Verse 20). The duty and interest of the church's friends in the day of distress is to pray and cry to heaven. — *Henry*.

10. (Verse 21.) As the blasphemies of his enemies engage him against them, so the prayers of his people engage him for them. — *Henry*.

11. Evil pursues sinners. — *Henry*.

12. God can overthrow great enemies as easily as small.

13. All the powers of nature are God's messengers to do his will. —

14. Note the confirmation of the Bible by the Assyrian monuments written at the time of the events, and hidden for ages, but now having a resurrection from their grave to confirm the word of God. So all nature and all science and all history, when we know their true meaning, are witnesses unimpeachable to the truth of God's word.

LESSON XII.—MARCH 24, 1878.

MANASSEH BROUGHT TO REPENTANCE.—2 CHRON. 33: 9-16.

TIME. Manasseh reigned B. C. 698-643; his captivity about 677.

PLACE. Kingdom of Judah, chiefly Jerusalem.

RULERS. Manasseh, king of Judah; Esar-haddon, king of Assyria.

Read in connection with the lesson 2 Kings 21: 1-18.

THE CONNECTION.

Manasseh, the fourteenth king of Judah, was only twelve years old when he succeeded his father Hezekiah; and he reigned fifty-five years. But of this, the longest reign in the annals of Judah, our accounts are extremely scanty. In the Second Book of Kings, it fills only eighteen verses, which are occupied with a general description of the monstrous evils of the period, almost to the exclusion of particular incidents. It would seem as if the sacred writer abstained from recording more of a reign so disgraceful than was sufficient to point the lesson of retribution. The narrative in the Chronicles is scarcely longer; but it is distinguished from the other by one remarkable feature, the story of Manasseh's captivity, repentance, and restoration. — *William Smith*.

| | |
|---|--|
| 9 So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, | whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. |
|---|--|

EXPLANATORY.

9. So Manasseh made Judah . . . to err. The reign of Manasseh was a period of fatal reaction in the religious policy of the state. The description of Manasseh's idolatries includes every form of false religion and abominable vice that Israel had ever learned from the heathen nations. He restored the high places and groves which Hezekiah had removed, established the worship of Baal in a manner worthy of the house of Ahab, and added to the obscene rites of Ashtoreth those unutterable abominations which made princes and subjects "rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah." The temple was profaned in a manner that even Ahaz had not attempted. An idol figure was set up in the sanctuary, and altars for the worship of the heavenly bodies in the two courts of the temple, while the ark was displaced from its abode. The king made his son pass through the fire to Molech, to whom he appears to have reared a stately temple in the valley of Hinnom. He dealt with wizards and necromancers, and, in short, "seduced the people to do more wickedness than the nations whom Jehovah destroyed before them." (2 Kings 21: 9.) — *William Smith*. He plunged into all the mysteries of sorcery, auguries, and necromancy. The sacred furnace of Tophet was built upon an enlarged scale. He himself undertook the sacrifice of his own children. The worship of the heavenly bodies, begun

10 And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.

11 Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took

by Ahas, was restored, and eagerly followed everywhere. Even the practice of human sacrifice became general. — *Stanley*.

10. **The Lord spake to Manasseh.** This great apostacy was not consummated without warnings from the prophets who had flourished under Hezekiah. As the king and people had repeated the sins of Ahab, the prophets denounced the doom of Samaria on Judah and Jerusalem in the most striking figurative language. (2 Kings 21: 10-15.) The king attempted to silence them by the fiercest persecution recorded in the annals of Israel. We are only told in the sacred history that Manasseh "filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which Jehovah would not pardon;" and that this was the crowning sin which doomed the nation to captivity. Fuller particulars of the persecution are preserved by Josephus, who tells us that executions took place every day. — *William Smith*.

11. **Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains . . . of the king of Assyria.** These crimes were not long left unavenged. It is inferred from passages in the prophets of the next age, that the Philistines, Moabites, and Ammonites, who had been tributary to Hezekiah, revolted from his son. But the great blow came from Assyria. Sennacherib's successor, Esar-haddon, one of the most powerful of all the Assyrian kings, soon put down the revolt of Evil-merodach, and abolished the vice-royalty of Babylon, fixing his own residence at that city for about 13 years (B.C. 680-667). Esar-haddon is the only Assyrian monarch whom we find to have actually reigned at Babylon, where he built himself a palace, bricks from which have been recently recovered bearing his name. This fact accounts for Manasseh being taken to Babylon, and not to Nineveh. To that city he carried Manasseh captive on a charge of rebellion; and it would seem that Jerusalem was taken at the same time. The date of this event is placed by a Jewish tradition at the twenty-second year of Manasseh (B.C. 677), which agrees very well with the account of the new colonization of the country of Samaria by settlers whom Esar-haddon (or Asnapper) sent from Babylon and other places. — *Smith*. The Assyrian monuments contain no record of this expedition; but there can be little doubt that it fell into the reign of Esar-haddon, who succeeded his father Sennacherib, and reigned at least 13 years. Esar-haddon mentions Manasseh among his tributaries; and he was the only king of Assyria who from time to time held his court at Babylon. — *Cook*. **Took Manasseh among the thorns.** This may mean, as is commonly supposed, that he had hid himself among a thicket of briars and brambles; and we know that the Hebrews sometimes took refuge from their enemies in thickets (1 Sam. 13: 6). — *J. F. and B.* The best critics reject the sense "thorns," and give to the Hebrew word the sense *rings*, the same which were put through the jaws of a fish when placed back in the water, that by means of a cord attached they might bring him up again. — *Cowles*. A similar instrument was used by the ancients for taming their prisoners, as appears from Amos 4: 2. They were in the habit of actually passing a ring through the flesh of their more distinguished prisoners, of attaching a thong or a rope to it, and of thus leading them about as with a "bridle." In Assyria the ring was at least ordinarily passed through the upper lip; while in Babylonia it appears to have been inserted into the membrane of the nose. Translate "which took Manasseh captive with rings." — *Cook*. **Bound him with fetters.** The Hebrew word rendered "fetters" denotes properly two chains of brass. The humiliating state in which Manasseh appeared before the Assyrian monarch may be judged of by a picture on a tablet in the Khorsabad palace, representing prisoners led bound into the king's presence. "The captives represented appear to be inhabitants of Palestine. Behind the prisoners stand four persons with inscriptions on the lower part of their tunics; the first two are bearded, and seem to be accusers; the remaining two are nearly defaced; but behind the last appears the eunuch, whose office it seems to be to usher into the presence of the king those who are permitted to appear before him. He is followed by another person of the same race as those under punishment; his hands are manacled, and on his ankles are strong rings fastened together by a heavy bar." — *Nineveh and its Palaces*. No name is given, and therefore no conclusion can be drawn that the figure represents Manasseh; but the people appear to be Hebrews, and this pictorial scene will enable us to imagine the manner in which the royal captive from Judah was received in the court of Babylon. — *J. F. and B.* **Carried him to Babylon** (the Greek form of Babel). For the reason, see illustration II. Babylon was the great capital of the Chaldean monarchy. It was situated upon a wide plain on both sides of the Euphrates. It seems to have grown up around the Tower of Babel, being founded by Nimrod. It rose into great importance and vast dimensions, becoming one of the most splendid cities of history. According to Ctesias, the circuit of the city was little less than 42 miles. According to Herodotus, an immense double wall surrounded the city

Manasseh among the thorns,¹ and bound² him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

12 And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and³ humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

13 And prayed unto him: and⁴ he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.

14 Now after this he built a wall

without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish-gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah.

15 And he took away the strange⁵ gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast *them* out of the city.

¹ Lam. 3: 7. ² Ps. 107: 10-14. ³ Hos. 5: 15. 1 Pet. 5: 6. ⁴ 1 Chron. 5: 20. Ezra 8: 23. ⁵ vers. 3, 5, 7.

the outer one being 56 miles in circumference. Authorities differ as to the dimensions of these walls: the lowest estimate makes them 350 feet high and 87 thick. The wall was surmounted with 250 towers. The entire wall was surrounded by a broad, deep trench filled with water from the river. The city was entered by a hundred gates, the posts, wings, and beams of which were of brass. Its greatest boast was the noted hanging gardens, constructed on an artificial hill by a succession of terraces 400 feet square, and higher than the towers on the city walls, and watered by means of pumps from the river. — *Whitney*.

12. When he was in affliction. Manasseh might now say with his grandfather David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." His prison was now a more happy place for him than his palace; Babylon a better school than Jerusalem. — *Bishop Hall*.

13. And prayed. True prayer is a sign of repentance, and return to God. There is always hope of a man when it can be said of him as of Saul of Tarsus, "Behold, he prayeth." He was entreated of him. We wonder not at Manasseh sinning or repenting; we wonder at the goodness of God, who thus graciously called him to repent, and so received him repenting. Who can despair of the mercy of God, that sees the tears of a Manasseh accepted? — *Bishop Hall*. Brought him again to Jerusalem. Possibly the death of Esar-haddon led to his release. Then he knew. His captivity and his prayer made him *know* that Jehovah was the true God. Blessed affliction that leads us home to our Father!

14. He built a wall. We may gather from this, that, late in his reign, Manasseh revolted from the Assyrians, and made preparations to resist them if they should attack him. Assyria began to decline in power about B.C. 647, and from that time her outlying provinces would naturally begin to fall off. — *Cook*. Without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley. Rather, "he built the outer wall of the city of David on the west of Gihon-in-the-valley." The wall intended seems to have been that towards the north-east, which ran from the vicinity of the modern Damascus gate across the valley of Gihon, to the "fish-gate" at the north-east corner of the "city of David." The captains who took Manasseh prisoner had probably destroyed or greatly damaged this part of the fortifications. — *Cook*. Compassed about Ophel. Ophel — probably was the hill or ridge lying on the east of Mount Zion and south of the temple area — had been fortified by Jotham (ch. 27: 3). It does not mean that a special wall was built around Ophel, but that the one just mentioned was continued around Ophel. And raised it up a very great height; i.e., the wall. Fenced cities; i.e., possessing walls and towers. The fortifications of the cities of Palestine consisted of one or more walls crowned with battlemented parapets, having towers at regular intervals, on which in later times engines of war were placed, and watch was kept by day and night in time of war. — *Smith*.

15. He took away the strange gods; i.e., the "Baalim" of verse 3. He had profaned the house of the Lord, but had not shut the doors as Ahaz did; therefore he is said only to have purged it from idols, and not to have opened it. — *Bishop Patrick*. The idol out of the house of the Lord. The carved image mentioned in verse 7. In the mount of the house of the Lord. The temple stood on Mount Moriah; and these altars stood in the inner and outer courts of the temple, and not in the temple itself. See 2 Kings 21: 5. Manasseh's repentance did not cause him to destroy these altars, but only to "cast them out of the city;" thus it was easy for them to be restored to their former places, which must have been done. See 2 Kings 23: 12. In Jerusalem. In the gardens and on the flat roofs of the houses were built brick altars, from which little clouds of incense were perpetually

16 And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings,¹ and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.

¹ Lev. 7: 12.

ascending. The name of Molech became a common oath. There was a succession of small furnaces in the streets, for which the children gathered wood, and in which their parents baked cakes as offerings to Astarte. — *Stanley*.

16. He repaired the altar of the Lord. The altar of burnt offering, which had probably been desecrated and damaged during the time of Manasseh's apostacy. Peace-offerings. They had the combined ideas of prosperity and retribution or acquittal, and were so called because they were always presented in reference to a prosperous state of affairs, either obtained and gratefully acknowledged, or supplicated. They were offered, (1) upon the recovery of peace with God in consequence of an expiation from some sin committed, (2) as an expression of thanksgiving for mercies received, (3) on the performance of a vow. They had a threefold character, voluntary, votive, and eucharistic (giving thanks). The material of the peace-offerings was to be either of the herd or the flock, but never of the fowl. The victim was to be divided between God, and the priest, and the people; to each a portion. — *Bush*. Thank-offerings. One kind of peace-offerings (the eucharistic), as given under peace-offerings. Commanded Judah to serve the Lord. This was a proof of the sincerity of his repentance, that he endeavored to bring his people back to the service of God, whom he himself had misled to the service of idols. But unhappily he was unable wholly to undo the mischief he had caused; for the people still continued their evil inclinations, and were not perfect in their obedience to the divine law (verse 17). — *Bishop Patrick*. In the Jewish Church his name was stamped with peculiar infamy. If a noble name had to be replaced by an odious one, that of Manasseh was substituted. His life in the Book of Kings closes without any relieving trait. It was considered as the turning-point of Judah's sins. The doom was then pronounced irreversible by any subsequent reforms. He was one of the three kings who had, according to the Jewish tradition, no part in the life to come, — Jeroboam, Ahab, Manasseh. Amon, his son, was a counterpart of himself. Both were buried in a sepulchre of their own, outside the city, in the garden of Uzza; called, it may be, from the son of Abinadab, who had perished beneath the walls of Jerusalem, on the first entrance of the ark (2 Kings 21: 18). — *Stanley*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Made Judah . . . to err (verse 1). When John Newton was on board "The Harwich," he became acquainted with a young midshipman who was then free from open vice. Newton corrupted him; and he soon arrived at maturity in guilt. Years after, they met; and, as Newton's conscience now began to be listened to again, he was anxious to rescue his former companion, if he could, from effects of which he had himself been the guilty cause. As he no longer felt infidelity to be tenable, he strove to undeceive his victim. His usual reply, however, was, that Newton was the first to give him an idea of his liberty, which he would not now forego. His efforts were vain; he got worse, spurned all restraints, gave loose to every passion. His excesses threw him into a malignant fever, of which he died; but not till he had appalled all those about him, and pronounced his own sad doom, without showing any symptom that he hoped or asked for mercy. — *Tweedie's Lamp to the Path*.

II. Carried him to Babylon (verse 11). Critics who are fond of inventing "new readings" might, upon consideration, be led to suggest that we should substitute "Nineveh," or "Assyria," for "Babylon," in the above passage. Why should the Assyrian generals carry their royal captive to Babylon? Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire. This apparently singular circumstance is explained by the remains recently discovered at Babylon. It is remarkable, that, of all the Assyrian monarchs, Esar-haddon seems to have been the only one who *actually ruled at Babylon*. During the period in which Babylon was subject to Assyria, it was commonly ruled by native viceroys; but the inscriptions recently discovered in Babylonia state that Esar-haddon built himself a palace in that province. He consequently resided there, at least for a time, which cannot be said of any other monarch of that line. Now naturally, therefore, it follows that the captive king of Judah should have been taken to *Babylon*, and not to *Nineveh*. Facts of this kind should check the hasty reception of "new" and "improved readings," merely because the originals may present a difficulty, or seem to contradict our preconceived notions. — *Biblical Treasury*.

III. When he was in affliction he besought the Lord (verse 12). *Sickness* (and the same may be said of afflictions of every kind) is remedial in its design, being permitted by God in order that it may bring forth in us "the peaceable fruits of righteousness." "You see a paper kite

soaring upward in the air. Presently it falls. Why? The string is broke. Do you see? *It was its being fastened down to the earth that enabled it to rise.* So God keeps men down by afflictions and trials in order that they may rise upward to himself. Jacob went away from home, travelling in the lonely country, no friend near him. But then think of the vision which he had. Why, it seemed as if on that night all heaven had come down to Jacob. He would never have had that vision at home: no, he must leave his home, and then he had the vision. Or, look at the Jews in Babylon. There, as the River Euphrates flowed on toward the ocean, there they sat, weeping over their homes in Zion. Sad were their feelings. But then it did for them what nothing else would have done, what the daily sacrifice did not, what the teachings of the prophets failed to accomplish: it entirely weaned them from idols. You never saw a Jew after that bow down to a graven image: it seemed to cast them clear upon God, and was thus, afflicting as the dispensation was, an evidence of his loving kindness." — *Rev. Thomas Jones.*

PRACTICAL.

1. The moral lesson for every Christian parent in this history is primarily this: Be intensely earnest and thorough in securing radical conversion *in the very earliest years of life.* To die, leaving a godless son of twelve years to run such a career as Manasseh ran, should appall every heart with dread, and intensify every endeavor to forestall it. — *Cowles.*

2. Made Judah to err (verse 9). One of the most terrible fruits of sin is that it does not remain alone. The sinner leads others into sin. It is a dreadful thing, not only to sin, but to lead others to sin.

3. Worse than the heathen. When a man falls from the high places of privilege and respectability, he falls low. All the power he has gained from godly influences and surroundings, he uses in sinning against God. A civilized sinner can do more evil than a heathen.

4. The Lord spake (verse 10). When men disregard the rebukes of God's word, he will let them feel his chastening rod. — *Scott.*

5. When in affliction (verse 12). Let men become wise by the sight of others' calamities, that they be not overtaken in their sins by death before they have repented. — *Wurt. Sum.*

6. Sanctified afflictions often become the means of conversion. — *Henry.*

7. God afflicts, not for the pleasure it gives him to see us in pain, but to bring us back to himself. See Heb. 12: 5-11.

8. And he prayed (verse 13). A deeply impressive illustration of the text, "Call upon me in the day of trouble" (Ps. 115). A very significant parallel to the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). — *Schultz.*

9. And he heard (verse 13). Afflictions are continued no longer than till they have done their work. When Manasseh is brought back to his God and his duty, he shall soon be brought back to his kingdom. — *Henry.*

10. Let not great sinners despair, when Manasseh himself on his repentance found favor with God. — *Henry.*

11. But let them remember that they can never be as good or as useful as they would have been had they begun earlier.

12. He took away strange gods (verse 15). Those that truly repent will not only return to God themselves, but will do all they can to bring back those who have been seduced by their example. — *Henry.*

13. The result. It is easy to debauch: it is not so easy to reform again. — *Henry.*

14. Penitents may recover their comfort sooner than their credit. — *Henry.*

15. Though Manasseh repented, his son Amon followed in the footsteps of his father in his wickedness, but not in his righteousness. Children will imitate their fathers in their vices, seldom in their repentance. — *Spurgeon.*

SECOND QUARTER.

From April 7, to Jan. 20, 1878.

LESSON I. — APRIL 7, 1873.

JOSIAH'S EARLY PIETY. — 2 CHRON. 34: 1-8.

TIME. B.C. 623-622. Josiah reigned B.C. 639-608. A correction of two years, required by recent investigations in the received chronology, is here introduced by William Smith.

PLACE. Jerusalem, and the kingdom of Judah, now tributary to Assyria.

RULERS. Josiah, king of Judah; Assur-banipal (Sardanapalus) and Saracus, last kings of Assyria; Nabo-polassar founds the Babylonian empire (625), and with Cyaxares of Media takes Nineveh (616); the Tarquins at Rome.

PROPHETS. Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah.

PSALMS. An inside view of the spirit and times of Josiah may be obtained from the Psalms composed or at least compiled during his reign or soon after. The fourth book of the Psalter (Ps. 90-106) falls under this description. We can scarcely be mistaken in ascribing the compilation of this fourth book to Jeremiah. The sympathy due to kindred spirit and to similar surroundings attracted him to Ps. 90, to which Ps. 91 is a counterpart. Ps. 101 well expresses the noble spirit of youthful piety and holy purpose which the history clearly assumes in the young king Josiah. We seem to have the very heart and hand of Jeremiah in Ps. 102, written in view of the events of his later years; Ps. 92 and 93 are at least pertinent to the times of that great reformation; while Ps. 106 may well refer to the first great deportation of captives. It is pleasant to hope that the joyous thanksgivings of that precious revival gave tone to Ps. 95-100 and 103-105. — *Cowles.*

THE CONNECTION.

At Manasseh's death, the idolatrous party, held in some check during his later years, recovered the entire direction of affairs, and obtained authority from the young king Amon (son of Manasseh) to make once more all the changes to idolatry which Manasseh had made in the early part of his reign. — *Cook.* Amon, the fifteenth king of Judah, succeeded his father at the age of twenty-two; and after a reign of two years, during which he followed Manasseh's idolatries without sharing his repentance, he fell the victim of a court conspiracy. The conspirators were slain by the people, who raised Josiah, the infant son of Amon, to the throne. — *Smith.*

1 Josiah¹ was eight years old | reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty
when he began to reign, and he | years.

¹ 2 Kings 22: 1.

EXPLANATORY.

1. Josiah, the sixteenth king of Judah, was eight years old at his accession, and reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath. Though he fell in battle before he had completed his fortieth year, he left the brighter name for piety and religious zeal among all the successors of David. He shares with Hezekiah the praise of walking perfectly in the way of his father David. His reign marks the last dying glory of the earthly kingdom of David. It may indeed seem mysterious that a doom, so often postponed by the repentance and faith of earlier kings, should have followed so close upon the reign of the best and most zealous of them all, and that he himself should have fallen by a premature and violent death. But we must look beyond the personal character of the king to the state of the people and their rulers. We have seen that the great reform of Hezekiah was probably superficial; the apostacy under Manasseh and Amon was the last and lowest stage in the long course of national degeneracy; and the deep corruption that prevailed during the minority of Josiah is drawn in the blackest colors by the prophets Zephaniah and Jere-

2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined *neither*¹ to the right hand, nor to the left.

3 ¶ For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young,² he

began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge³ Judah and Jerusalem from the high⁴ places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.

¹ Deut. 5: 32; 17: 11, 20; 28: 14. Josh. 1: 7. ² Prov. 8: 17. Eccl. 12: 1. ³ Lev. 26: 30. ⁴ ch. 33: 17, 22.

miah. The very violence of Josiah's reformation indicates the absence of true and spontaneous sympathy among the people. In short, they were past purifying except by the fiercest fires of affliction.—*Smith*. The history of Josiah fills two chapters in Kings (22 and 23), and two in Chronicles (34 and 35). "The people of the land made him king instead of his wicked father."—*Cowles*. The popular election which placed Josiah on the throne, of itself marks some strong change of public feeling. There was also a circle of remarkable persons in or around the palace and temple, who, possibly driven together by the recent persecutions, had formed a compact band, which remained unbroken till the fall of the monarchy itself.—*Stanley*.

2. And he did right. Josiah must not be regarded as an example of the quiet growth of youthful piety under favorable culture. So evil were the influences about him that he only "began to seek after the God of David his father" in his sixteenth year. His religion was his own decided choice, as the first act of his opening manhood,—a choice prompted by that loyalty to his high calling as the son of David, which marks every act of his reign. Doubtless he was aided and encouraged by some among the priests, and by prophets such as Zephaniah and Jeremiah; but it is a striking feature of his history, that the king himself is the prime mover in every act of reformation.—*Smith*. In the sight of God. Not only outwardly, but in his heart: he not only meant right, but his actions and character were right. Neither to the right nor the left. This phrase, common in the time of Moses and Joshua, is rare in the later Scriptures. It implies an undeviating obedience to all the commandments.—*Cook*. Verse 2 characterizes in general the reign of Josiah, and forms, as it were, the title of the entire following passage.—*W. F. Bahr*.

3. Eighth year. This was the sixteenth year of his age; and, as the kings of Judah were considered minors till they had completed their thirteenth year, it was three years after he had attained his majority. He had very early manifested the piety and excellent dispositions of his character. In the twelfth year of his reign, but the twentieth of his age, he began to take a lively interest in the purgation of his kingdom from all the monuments of idolatry which, in his father's short reign, had been erected; and, at a later period, his increasing zeal for securing the purity of divine worship led him to superintend the work of demolition in various parts of his dominions. The course of the narrative in this passage is somewhat different from that followed in the Book of Kings. For the historian, having made allusion to the early manifestation of Josiah's zeal, goes on with a full detail of all the measures this good king adopted for the extirpation of idolatry; whereas the author of the Book of Kings sets out with the cleansing of the temple, immediately previous to the celebration of the passover, and embraces that occasion to give a general description of Josiah's policy for freeing the land from idolatrous pollution. The exact chronological order is not followed either in Kings or Chronicles; but it is clearly recorded in both that the abolition of idolatry began in the twelfth and was completed in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign. While yet young. Blessed are those who begin young to serve their God,—fewer sins to break off, a longer time in which to do good, a life less tainted with early sins and habits. Compare Manasseh's and Josiah's piety. The great majority of all who become Christians at all become so when young.—*J. F. and B.* Twelfth year. Josiah was now, at the age of twenty, perhaps for the first time, free to act.—*Cook*. Purge Judah and Jerusalem.—The call of Jeremiah (Jer. 1: 2) so exactly coincides with the commencement of Josiah's reformation, that we can scarcely regard the two facts as unconnected.—*Cook*. With new zeal the people set to the work of purging Jerusalem from idolatry. All the monuments of false worship were destroyed, from the temples built by Solomon on the Mount of Olives, and the horses and chariots which successive kings had dedicated to the sun at the temple-gates, to the altars set up by Ahaz and Manasseh. The images were brought out of the temple, and ground to powder, and their dust strewn on the brook Kishon. The houses devoted to the orgies of Ashtoreth and the worse abominations of Sodom were pulled down. Tophet, the seat of the worship of Molech, in the valley of Hinnom, was defiled with the bones of the idol-priests; and the fire of the god was used for consuming the refuse of the city (2 Kings 23: 1-14).—*Smith*.

4 And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that *were* on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them,¹ and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them.

5 And he burnt² the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.

6 And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about.

7 And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had

¹ 2 Kings 23: 4. ² 1 Kings 13: 2.

4. **Baalim.** The plural of Baal, because there were many images of Baal. **The images.** (Margin, sun-images.) Some kind of idolatrous fabrication dedicated to the sun. — *Bush.* Baal being the sun, these were peculiar images or columns dedicated to him. From the expressions in Ezra 6: 4, 6, and Lev. 26: 30, it may be inferred that these columns which perhaps represented a rising flame of fire, and stood upon the altar of Baal, were of wood or stone. — *W. A. Wright.* **Groves.** Hebrew, Asherim, the idolatrous (wooden) pillars of Astarte. — *Woodworth.* **Carved images.** These sculptured images were apparently of wood, iron, or stone, covered with gold or silver, the more costly being of solid metal. The several stages of the process by which the metal or wood became the "graven image" are vividly described in Isa. 44: 10-20. — *W. A. Wright.* **Strewed upon the graves.** Every instrument or image, if of wood, was burnt; if of metal or stone, was shattered to pieces and ground to powder. The ashes were carried beyond the territory of Judah, or thrown on the numerous graves along that vast cemetery, the necropolis of the glen of the Kedron. — *Stanley.* In order to still further dishonor the ashes of the destroyed idols. — *Bahr.* To desecrate the graves as the graves of idolaters. — *Keil.*

5. **The bones of priests on their altars.** The priests whose bones were burnt were probably first seized and put to death (2 Kings 23: 20). — *Cook.* They suffered upon their own altars the death penalty imposed by the law (Deut. 17: 2-5). At the same time these altars were thereby defiled. — *Bahr.* Then fell in rapid succession the houses of those who ministered to the licentious rites close by the temple, and the sanctuaries that stood just outside the gates of Jerusalem. The wooden chariots consecrated to the sun, the brazen altars planted by Ahaz and Manasseh in different parts of the temple, disappeared. Everywhere, as by a kind of exorcism, he desecrated the sanctuaries of the high places, especially those in the valley of Hinnom and on Mount Olivet, by heaping upon them the bones of the dead. — *Stanley.*

6. **In the cities of Manasseh.** Even beyond the limits of Judah his zeal extended to the old Israelite sanctuaries of Bethel and Samaria. Thither he came as the long-expected deliverer, foretold by Iddo the seer. A terrible vengeance followed on those who had ministered at these shrines. Those that he still found alive were executed upon their own altars. Of those who were dead, the bones were dug up (with the one exception of the prophet of Bethel, whose memory was still preserved on the spot), and thrown upon the sites of the altars which they had once served. — *Stanley.* The reader is apt to be surprised on finding that Josiah, whose hereditary possessions were confined to the kingdom of Judah, exercised as much authority among the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, Simeon, and others, as far as Naphtali, as he did within his own dominions; and therefore it is necessary to observe, that, after the destruction of Samaria by Shalmanezar, the remnant that continued on the mountains of Israel maintained a close intercourse with Judah, and looked to the sovereigns of that kingdom as their natural protectors. Those kings acquired great influence over them, which Josiah exercised in removing every vestige of idolatry from the land. He could not have done this without the acquiescence of the people in the propriety of this proceeding, conscious that this was conformable to their ancient laws and institutions. The Assyrian kings, who were now masters of the country, might have been displeased at the liberties Josiah took beyond his own territories. But either they were not informed of his doings, or they did not trouble themselves about his religious proceedings, relating, as they would think, to the god of the land; especially as he did not attempt to seize upon any place or disturb the allegiance of the people. — *Culmet.* **With their mattocks.** Or "in their deserts," so that the verse will stand thus: "And so did he (viz., break the altars, and burn the bones of priests) in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, in their deserted suburbs." — *J. F. and B.*

7. **Returned to Jerusalem.** From his excursion into the neighboring countries (verse 6). For a fuller account of this work read 2 Kings 23: 1-20.

beaten the graven images into powder,¹ and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

8 ¶ Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged

the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.

¹ Deut. 9: 21.

8. The eighteenth year. When he was 26 years old. This was the year in which the great work begun six years before was carried fully out. Purged the land and the house. The purging of the temple had probably been the first work. From purging he proceeded to repairs; and these had evidently been carried on for some considerable time before this particular occasion — Cook. Shaphan, called scribe in 2 Kings 22: 3. The scribe or secretary was on an equality with the governor and royal recorder. We may think of the scribes as the king's secretaries writing his letters, drawing up his decrees, managing his finances. The scribes became a body of men whose duty it was to transcribe old records, and put in writing what had been handed down orally; then to preserve the sacred books, the laws, hymns, prophecies, of the past. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. Maaseiah. Not elsewhere mentioned. Recorder. An officer of high rank in the Jewish state, exercising the functions not simply of an annalist, or maker of records, but of chancellor or president of the privy council. His title has reference to his office as adviser of the king. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. Repair the house. The first work was to clear away the impediments and purge out the evils that had gathered in and about the house of the Lord. But all this is of little avail without repairing the temple, and renewing the service of God. The people must be taught and trained in religion, or they would soon go back to idolatry. To cut off outward sins, is but the beginning of a true reformation. The essential work is the forming a new heart and character, and the cultivating a new and better life. First dig up the weeds, but it is the good seed from which the good crop is to come.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Youthful piety (verse 2). In a Chinese Christian family at Amoy, a little boy, the youngest of three children, on asking his father to allow him to be baptized, was told that he was too young; that he might fall back if he made a profession when he was only a little boy. To this he made the touching reply, "Jesus has promised to carry the lambs in his arms. I am only a little boy: it will be easier for Jesus to carry me." This logic of the heart was too much for the father. He took him with him, and the dear child was ere long baptized. The whole family of which this child is the youngest member — the father, mother, and three sons — are all members of the mission church at Amoy. — *Missionary Magazine*.

II. Religious enthusiasm (verses 3, 4). "Once risen into this divine white heat of temper, were it only for a season and not again, a nation is thenceforth considerable through all its remaining history. What immensities of dross and crypto-poisonous matter will it not burn out of itself in that high temperature in the course of a few years! Witness Cromwell and his Puritans making England habitable even under the Charles Second terms for a couple of centuries more. Nations are benefited, I believe, for ages, by being thrown once into divine white heat in this manner." — *Carlyle, History of Frederick*, vol. 1., book iii., chap. viii.

III. Bones of priests burnt on their own altars (verse 5). No law is more equitable than that by which the deviser of death perishes by his own device. The early ballads of every literature delight in these retributive surprises. Popular history is fond of teaching this sort of philosophy. Cardinal Balue, under Louis XI., is pointed out in his iron cage as a malignant inventor punished in and through his own invention. Balue was really not the inventor of the iron cages, but their importer into France; and the *lex talionis* has its application to him. The regent Morton was hugged to death by the "maiden" he had been the means of introducing into Scotland. Nor among the lyrical pieces of Southey be forgotten that ballad of the "Inchcape rock," which tells how the bell put up by the Abbot of Aberbrothok to warn ships of their peril was taken down by a sea-pirate, Sir Ralph the Rover, who, a year after, perished upon the same rock, with ship and goods, in the righteous judgment of God. — *Jacox, Scripture Texts illustrated by General Literature*.

IV. Violent reform. "I will only reply to those who charge Josiah with cruelty and tyranny, that those who should preach murder as a religious duty and as an exercise pleasing to God would not be left unpunished in any enlightened State. Josiah therefore, when he put an end to these abominable sacrifices of innocence, did no more than the kindest ruler would have considered it his duty to

do." To allow the priests of Baal to live, would be to nourish seducers for the people. We should like to know how Josiah should have undertaken to have got rid of the harlots and male prostitutes who settled themselves in the very fore-court of the sanctuary, and there carried on their shameful occupations, or to abolish the horrible rites of Molech with their child-sacrifice and licentiousness. That would never have been possible in the way of kindness. — *Bahr*.

V. Mild measures. If mild measures would not have availed to accomplish the designed object, neither did these violent measures have that effect. Josiah's reformation failed of any permanent effect. We had occasion to use strong terms in condemnation of the violent and bloody attempt of Manasseh to crush out the Jehovah-religion. Violence for violence: can we approve of the means employed in the one case any more than in the other? Is the highest Christian conscience incapable of any better verdict than this, — violence when employed by the party with which we sympathize is right, but when employed against that party it is wrong? In attempting to account for and understand the conduct of Josiah, it would be as senseless to expect him to see and practise toleration as to expect him to use fire-arms against Necho. We can never carry back modern principles into ancient times, and judge men by the standards of to-day. On the other hand, when we have to judge actions, as examples for our own conduct, we must judge them inflexibly by the highest standards of right. Thus judged, Josiah's reformation was unwise in its method. Its failure is a warning. We are sure of our modern principles of toleration, and of suffering persecution rather than inflicting it. We believe in these principles, even as the means of propagating our opinions. — *W. G. Sumner*.

PRACTICAL.

1. He did right (verse 1). It was not circumstances and favorable influences that made Josiah good amid such bad surroundings. He was good in spite of circumstances. If he could be good young, so can we.

2. In the sight of the Lord, &c. (verse 2). He had two guides: an earthly and a heavenly guide. So we should look to God, and follow good examples.

3. In the ways of David. He led to fellow closely the best examples. In the worst of times we meet examples of liberality, fidelity, integrity, worthy of praise and imitation. — *Scott*.

4. Neither to right hand nor left. The way which leads to life is narrow; and it is well to have a firm heart, so as not to totter on either side. He fell neither into superstition nor unbelief. — *Starke*.

5. While yet young (verse 3). It is the duty and interest of young people, and will particularly be the honor of young gentlemen, as soon as they come to years of understanding, to begin to seek God; "for they that seek him early shall find him." — *Henry*.

6. The reasons why it is wise to become Christians young.

7. We ought not to despair of the children of the godless, nor give them up. They may become, as in this case, the most pious, through whom God accomplishes wonders. — *Wurt. Sumn.*

8. Purge Judah (verse 3). So must we cleanse out every sin, every idol of the heart, all selfishness, from our lives and from our hearts.

9. Bones upon their altars (verse 5). Haman was hanged on his own gallows. Our wrongful and sinful nature brings the means of its own punishment. "Curses, like chickens, always come home to roost." "Ashes always fly in the face of him who throws them."

10. Repair the house (verse 8). Thus must we do by the spiritual temple of the heart; get it cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and then renewed, so as to be transformed into the image of God. — *Henry*.

11. So must we do with the Church of God, — purify and rebuild and renew.

12. We should avoid Josiah's violent measures, as our circumstances are so different from his; but we should show the same earnestness and zeal for moral reform, and spiritual revival, and the saving of all the people from sin.

LESSON II. — APRIL 14, 1878.

THE SCRIPTURES FOUND AND SEARCHED.—2 CHRON. 34 : 14-22.

TIME. B. C. 622; the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign; about the time of the destruction of Nineveh, 625-606.

PLACE. Jerusalem. The kingdom of Judah still tributary to the Babylonian Empire.

RULERS. Josiah, king of Judah; Nabo-polassar, king of Babylonian Empire; Psammetichus I., of Egypt.

PROPHETS. Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk.

THE CONNECTION.

For several years, while the purging of the nation from idolatry was in progress, a collection was being made for the renovation of the temple. "This money had been collected, not merely at the temple (2 Kings 22: 4), but also, and perhaps mainly, by collectors who had visited all parts both of Judah and Israel (ch. 34: 9) in order to obtain contributions." This money was deposited in the temple till the time came to begin the repairs. The idols and altars and shrines of idolatry, which had been allowed in the very court of the temple, were all taken away. Open idolatry was driven from the nation, and especially from Jerusalem. The repairs were going on. Architects, carpenters, stone-cutters, and masons were busy, and so faithful that no account needed to be kept of expenses. While these repairs were being prosecuted so earnestly, the great discovery was made which forms the subject of to-day's lesson.

14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found a book¹ of the law of the LORD given by Moses.

¹ Deut. 17: 18, 19. Josh. 1: 8.

EXPLANATORY.

14. Brought out the money. It would seem that the book of the law was found by Hilkiah in the treasury where they stowed the money for security. It had probably been secreted for security in the previous persecutions of Manasseh (2 Kings 21: 16). Perhaps the priest or Levite who had secreted it had perished in the persecution, and the place where it was deposited was forgotten. — *Woodworth*. No place would be more likely for the safe hiding of the ark and the book of the law than the secret treasury vaults, which must have been unused during the idolatrous reigns of the previous kings. The ark also was removed from its place in the holy of holies, and was somehow lost, and was now found again, during the repairs of the temple. (2 Chron. 35: 3.) — *Kell*. Hilkiah (Jehovah is my portion). The high priest. The son of Shallum, and apparently the ancestor of Ezra the scribe. His high priesthood was rendered particularly illustrious by the reformation effected under it by King Josiah. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. Book of the Law. This was no other than the temple copy, which was deposited beside the ark in the holy of holies. Not a book of the law, but the book of the law can literally and historically mean nothing else than the book of the law of Moses, or the Pentateuch. — *Kell*. The thorough search which was made in the temple for the removal of every relic of idolatry or superstition which former kings had introduced, brought to light the autograph copy of the law written by Moses; and, in opening it, the eye fell upon the passage, Deut. 28: 15-68, declaring the doom which awaited the nation if it fell into idolatry. Offered to the attention thus, in an old manuscript written by that holy and venerable hand, it made an extraordinary impression, which may in part, although still imperfectly, be understood by him who has been privileged to examine some one of the most ancient manuscripts of the Scriptures now existing; and whom the very oldness of the vellum, and the antique style of the writing, with the knowledge of the long ages through which its existence may be traced, seem to take back so much nearer to the time of the writer, and give a vividness to his impressions of ancient truth, which no modern copy can impart. It is a curious feeling, which one must experience fully to appreciate. And, if this be the case in respect of manuscripts which still fall far short of the time of the writers, how still more intense would it be in the presence of an autograph copy! Suppose, for instance, we had the autograph of St. John's Gospel, and read on the last page the words, "This is that disciple that testifieth of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true:" would not this, written under his own hand, give an intensity to our conviction of the truth of his testimony, such as we had never before been able to realize in the perusal of the printed copies, or even of the most ancient manuscripts? — *Kitto*. We are not to conclude that the people had at this time no copies of the law among them; but it is probable that at this time the copies of the law were very scarce. — *S. Clarke*. The ignorance of the law which seems to have prevailed may be sufficiently accounted for from the history of the preceding reigns. For Manasseh wanted neither the power nor the inclination to destroy the copies of the law, had they been secreted by the servants of the true God. The copy was probably the original written by Moses; for there was certainly not a greater interval from the death of Moses to the death of

15 And Hilkiab answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiab delivered the book to Shaphan.

16 And Shaphan carried¹ the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it.

17 And they have gathered together the money that was found in

the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen.

18 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiab the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

19 And it came to pass, when the king had heard² the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

20 And the king commanded

¹ Jer. 36: 20, 21. ² Rom. 7: 7, 9.

Josiah than 950 years; and we have manuscripts existing among us, at the present day, of greater age than this. — *Dr. Kennicott*.

15. Shaphan the scribe. See last lesson, verse 8. It was natural that the high priest should give the book to the private secretary of the king, who by his office had charge of the books of the law, and records of the past. The book. The most ancient, as the most common material which the Hebrews used for writing, was dressed skin in some form or other. They may have acquired the knowledge of the art of dressing the skins from the Egyptians, among whom it had attained great perfection. "The leather straps across the bodies of mummies," says Sir G. Wilkinson, "and the beauty of the figures stamped upon them, prove the skill of the leather-cutters, some of these bearing the names of kings who ruled Egypt about the period of the exodus, or 3,300 years ago." The skins when written upon were formed into rolls. They were rolled upon one or two sticks, and fastened with a thread, the ends of which were sealed. The rolls were generally written on one side only. They were divided into columns, the upper margin to be not less than three fingers broad, and the lower not less than four; and a space of two fingers' breadth was to be left between every two columns. For parchment or skins, a reed was used for a pen; and the ink, generally black, was lampblack dissolved in gall juice. — *Rev. William H. Ward*.

16. Brought the king word back. Shaphan took the new-found book to the king when he returned from the temple to report the progress of the work.

18. Read it before the king. Very probably Josiah had no copy in his possession, as the Mosaic law required the kings of Israel to have. — *Cowles*.

19. Rent his clothes. A usual mode among the ancients of expressing the highest degree of sorrow or grief. The profound and startling impression made upon the king by the reading of this book may have been due wholly to the fact that it brought to him the very words of God through Moses, — supposably those fearful denunciations of judgment for idolatry which may be seen in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28, which met so pertinently the case of the men of his generation, and therefore seemed to bring down those fearful maledictions fresh from the lips of the Almighty, thundering against the very people for whom he was in a sort responsible, as the king. More than one generation may have passed away with its hiding-place unknown. Then coming to light so unexpectedly, when its fearful maledictions were apparently (and really too) on the verge of fulfilment, it need surprise no one that Josiah was startled, and his soul moved to its depths. — *Cowles*. It is hard for us to realize the full force of this discovery. We can scarcely conceive of a state of things in which, during centuries of the nominal establishment of Christianity, the people should still observe solemn festivals at the old sites of Druidical worship; the altars of Thor and Woden and Freya should smoke with sacrifices in every city, town, and village, their statues be set up in our cathedrals, and the heights around London should be crowned with the temples of Siva and Juggernaut; all this lasting for centuries, with an occasional and partial return to the purer form of worship, while the BIBLE, never multiplied by printing, and only known in older and purer times through infrequent readings by the clergy, should have been utterly lost and forgotten. Add to this the supposition that the lost volume contained, not the dark symbols of the Apocalypse, but the clear warning of national destruction and captivity to befall us because of these idolatries, and then let us imagine our feelings on its sudden discovery. No wonder that Josiah rent his clothes and could not rest till he found a prophet to expound these terrible denunciations. — *Smith*.

20. Ahikam, a friend of Jeremiah (Jer. 26: 24). Abdon, a man of influence at court (Jer. 26 12). Asaiah. Nothing more is known of this person. — *Cook*.

Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying,

21 Go, inquire¹ of the LORD for me, and for them that are left² in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great³ is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because

our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book.

22 And Hilkiah, and *they* that the king *had appointed*, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college): and they spake to her to that effect.

¹ Jer. 21: 2. Ezek. 14: 1, &c.; 20: 1, &c. ² Isa. 37: 4. ³ Lev. 26: 14, &c. Deut. 28: 15; 29: 18-25; 30: 17-19; 31: 16-22; 32: 15-25. Rom. 1: 18; 2: 8-12.

21. Go, inquire of the Lord for me. The agitated feelings of the king prompted him to ask immediate counsel how to avert those curses under which his kingdom lay; and forthwith a reputation of his principal officers was sent to one endowed with the prophetic spirit. — *J. F. and W. Left in Israel.* The king regarded the *ten* tribes as being under his care, no less than the *two*. — *Cook.* See last lesson on ver. 6. Great is the wrath. That foretold in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28.

22. Huldah the prophetess. The occasion was urgent, and therefore they were sent — not to Zephaniah (Zeph. 1: 1) who was perhaps young, nor to Jeremiah who was probably absent at his house in Anathoth, but to one who was at hand and known for her prophetic gifts — to Huldah, who was probably at this time a widow. Her husband, Shallum, was grandson of one Hasrah, "keeper of the wardrobe." If this means the priestly wardrobe, he must have been a Levite; but it probably refers to the royal wardrobe. She dwelt . . . in the college. Rather, in the *Ménah*, taking the original word as a proper name, not a school or college, but a particular suburb of Jerusalem. She was held in such veneration that Jewish writers say, she and Jeholada the priest were the only persons, not of the house of David (2 Chron. 24: 16), who were ever buried in Jerusalem. — *J. F. and B.* The expositors raise the question why the king applied to Huldah, and not to Jeremiah? The most probable answer is that Jeremiah was absent in Anathoth, his native town. — *Keil.* In the college. The marginal translation is preferable, "in the second part," by which is probably meant the new or outer city, that which had been enclosed by the wall of Manasseh to the north of the old city (2 Chron. 33: 14). — *Cook.* Her reply to the high priest and officers whom Josiah sent to consult her confirmed his worst fears for the fate of the city and the kingdom; but she added a message of comfort to the king. As he had shown a tender heart, and had humbled himself before God when he heard his words of threatening, he should be gathered to his fathers in peace, and not see the evil that was coming on Jerusalem. — *Smith.* The appalling truth was therefore forced upon Josiah, that all hope of saving his nation was virtually extinguished; that his great effort at reformation might delay the outbursting of these judgments, might save many individual souls from perdition, but could not permanently arrest the downward proclivity of the masses, could not effectually save the nation. It is not easy to estimate the sad, depressing, and yet quickening impulses of such a revelation from God. Moreover, Josiah saw that it must be so. The power of idolatry throughout his kingdom was terrific; the heart of the masses was fearfully saturated with its spirit. He could send abroad his royal mandate, and find a few trusty men to arm with his authority to go forth, leveling heathen groves, crashing down idol-images and altars, burning dead men's bones on all desecrated localities; but it must have been a mountain of lead on his heart to think that the roots of this awful sin would yet remain, and that not many years would elapse before the vials of God's wrath would be poured out for sins and abominations that defied all remedy. Thirteen more remained before Josiah's death. So far as can be inferred from the history, he continued to reign in the fear of the Lord to his death. — *Covales.* But, in spite of all this effort, the kingdom of Judah was doomed. Perhaps the very vehemence of the attempt carried with it its own inefficacy. Even the traditions which invested Josiah with a blaze of preternatural glory maintained that in his day the sacred oil was forever lost. Too late is written on the pages even which describe this momentary revival. It did not reach the deeply-seated, wide-spread corruption which tainted rich and poor alike. — *Stanley.*

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. The Bible neglected. In the gloomy cell of an Indian jail, a number of prisoners were attentively listening to a gentleman who was earnestly entreating them to study the Scriptures.

Wishing to ascertain if they possessed the precious volume he put the question, "Have any of you the Bible?" After a considerable pause, a soldier, who was under sentence of death for murdering a black man, broke the silence, and, amidst sobs and tears, confessed that he once had a Bible. "But," said he, "I sold it for drink. It was the companion of my youth. I brought it from my native land. Oh! if I had listened to my Bible, I should not have been here." — *Bib. Treasury*.

II. Regard for the Bible. When copies of the Bible were taken to Mangala (South Sea Islands) the joy of the people was very great. At a subsequent missionary prayer-meeting, an aged disciple, after addressing the people from a text in the book of Job (ch. 5: 17-19), lifted up his Bible before the whole congregation, and said, "My brethren and sisters, this is my resolve: the dust shall never cover my Bible, the moth shall never eat it, the mildew shall never rot it. My light! my joy!" — *Gill's Gems from the Coral Islands*.

III. Rent his clothes. A somewhat unlettered but celebrated evangelist years ago, face to face with the culture of Harvard, was accused of leading audiences into excitement. "I have heard," said he, in reply, "of a traveller who saw at the side of the way a woman weeping and beating her breast. He ran to her, and asked, 'What can I do for you? What is the cause of your anguish?' — 'My child is in the well! My child is in the well!' With swiftest despatch assistance was given, and the child rescued. Farther on this same traveller met another woman wailing also, and beating her breast. He came swiftly to her, and with great earnestness asked, 'What is your trouble?' — 'My pitcher is in the well! My pitcher is in the well!' Our great social and political excitements are all about pitchers in wells, and our religious excitements are about children in wells." — *Joseph Cook*.

IV. Wrath for sin (verse 21). While sin continues, God cannot forgive it without making the sinner worse. In this city, six thousand people were told the other evening, with great depth of thought, that if a child deliberately lies, and you forgive the child before he has exhibited any sorrow for the act, you make the child worse. That is, indeed, a very simple instance of the moral law; but in scientific minds there is no doubt that the moral law is equally universal with the physical. The self-propagating power of habit, acting in the sphere of evil affections, arranges the nature of things against evil. Good has but one enemy, the evil; but the evil has two enemies, the good and itself. "Every man," says the Spanish proverb, "is the son of his own deeds." "Every action," says Richter, "becomes more certainly an eternal mother than it is an eternal daughter." These are the irreversible laws according to which all character tends to a final permanence, good or bad. This may occur in the best possible universe, in which all things will of course work together for good to the good, and therefore, of necessity, for evil to the evil. Adhere to the proposition that there cannot be an upper without an under. Can God arrange the universe so that all things in it shall work together for the good of the good, without arranging it so that all things shall work together for the evil of the evil? Can God be God, and not arrange the universe so that all things in it shall work together for the good of the good? Can God be God, and not so arrange the universe that all things shall work together for the evil of the evil? We shall find it a thing at least as terrible to fall under the power of God as it is to fall under the power of the nature of things. Assuredly the nature of things will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax of loyalty to itself; the nature of things assuredly, too, may be a consuming fire to all disloyalty to itself. It may be an omnipresent kiss or an omnipresent flame. — *Joseph Cook*.

V. Seeking for guidance (verses 21, 22). A few years ago a most painful sensation was created in the public mind by the intelligence of a distressing and fatal accident which had happened to a distinguished archdeacon of the Established Church. This gentleman, eminent alike for his character and his writings, was spending a short time on the Continent, and, having with some friends ascended a mountain, expressed a strong wish to return alone by a new route. His companions remonstrated, pointed out the danger of attempting to follow an unknown path, and urged that at least their friend would accept the services of a guide. Unhappily, he would not be persuaded, and presently commenced his perilous descent. The rest of the party reluctantly pursued their course, and waited his arrival at the inn. As time passed on, and the archdeacon did not appear, their fears were re-awakened, and search was ordered to be made. Soon they were horrified, yet not surprised, to hear that the lifeless body of their friend had been found beneath a precipice, over which he had fallen in his attempt to reach the inn. How striking an illustration does this sad incident afford of the fatal obstinacy of those who persist in relying on their own wisdom and strength of purpose in the journey of life! What can await them but destruction if they refuse to accept guidance? Yet even a guide is not enough at all times. Only a few weeks ago, a party of travellers on Mont Blanc, accompanied by skilful guides, were overtaken by an avalanche; and not only two of their number, but one of the guides also, perished in a moment. We need an unerring guide; and where shall it be found but in Him who is infinite wisdom as well as infinite love? — *W. H. G. in Bib. Treasury*.

PRACTICAL.

1. **Found the book of the law.** Bless God that we have plenty of Bibles, and that they are or may be in all hands! — *Henry*.

2. Those who have the Bible in their houses, and have read it carelessly, may know almost as little about its blessed and wonderful teachings and revelations as Josiah about the Bible lost in the temple treasury.

3. Those who come to God's book with love and desire for its spiritual truths, and to obey them, will find a new treasure, a revelation of God's word, as marvellous as that which came to Josiah through his new-found Bible.

4. The prevalence of impiety, infidelity, superstition, or licentiousness, renders the word of God a neglected book; and that neglect reciprocally augments these evils. — *Scott*.

5. The abundance of Bibles with which this land is favored will exceedingly aggravate the guilt of our national impiety; for what greater contempt of God can we show than to refuse to read his word? — *Scott*.

6. **Rent his clothes** (verse 19). Men ought to be stirred to the depths of their natures on account of their sins. If enthusiasm is ever right or noble, it is for the escape from sin, and the helping others to escape.

7. **Go inquire** (verse 21). Convictions of sin should put us on the inquiry, What shall I do to be saved? — *Henry*.

8. **Wrath poured out upon us** (verse 21). Josiah saw not the promises, but the threatenings, because he was conscious that he deserved the wrath. The sinner must first feel and realize the greatness of his sin and danger: then when saved he can rest in the promises.

9. Sin always brings wrath. Nowhere in the universe can one remain in sin, and not be exposed to the wrath of God.

10. **Went to the prophetess** (verse 22). It was a mercy that when Bibles were scarce they had prophets; and, when prophecy ceased, they had more Bibles. — *Henry*.

11. Those who wish in their hearts to be Christians will seek advice and help of others, to help them understand God's word, and do according to its precepts.

LESSON III. — APRIL 21, 1878.**JEREMIAH IN PRISON. — JER. 33 : 1-9.**

TIME. Jeremiah prophesied from B.C. 627, till after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the kingdom of Judah, which occurred B.C. 586 or 588. Date of lesson, B.C. 588 or 590.

PLACE. Jerusalem.

RULERS. Zedekiah, king of Judah; Nebuchadnezzar, king of Assyria and Babylon; Pharaoh Hophra, king of Egypt.

PROPHETS. Jeremiah in Judah; Daniel in Babylon; Ezekiel also in Babylon, where he had been carried captive with 10,000 captives during the reign of Jehoiakim in B.C. 597.

CIRCUMSTANCES. Jerusalem besieged by Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah is confined in prison for foretelling its destruction. While in prison, he utters the encouraging prophecy of the lesson, foretelling their return from the 70 years' captivity. Read chs. 37, 38.

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH.

A very considerable portion of Jeremiah's prophecies fall within the reign of Jehoiakim, the second son of Josiah, who reigned 11 years, and was one of the meanest and wickedest kings that ever disgraced that throne. He stood opposed to Jeremiah on political as well as religious grounds. Consequently he permitted and even instigated a rancorous persecution against him, from which the latter more than once barely escaped with his life. The dates of his several prophecies are usually given; yet in some cases the indications of time and circumstance are so dim as to occasion considerable diversity of opinion among critics. The order of their arrangement in the book is very peculiar. To a considerable extent, it is chronological; and yet there are several entire departures from this principle. It appears that at first, and for some time, his prophecies were merely oral, and not written out. Then (ch. 30: 1-3 and 36: 1-4), the Lord directed him to write

them in a book; and Baruch became his amanuensis for this purpose. The first copy passed into the hands of King Jehoiakim, who defiantly cut it up with his penknife, and burnt it in his parlor fire (36: 22, 23). Then by the Lord's direction, these prophecies were re-written, with the addition of "many like words." This copy seems to have been preserved (36: 32). It is not clear that the order of arrangement in which they have come down to us is specially due to the hand of Jeremiah; nor is it a matter of special consequence. There is no reason to question their genuineness. Criticism on his style will be of small account. He did not write to say fine things, or for the sake of displaying a classic style, but to announce momentous truths from a burdened heart, in words as plain and solemnly impressive as he could command. His book is valuable to us almost exclusively for its *great moral lessons*. These are above rubics. Here we see delineated the full administration of God's government not over Judah alone, but all the prominent nations of Western Asia. It also reveals God in his relations to his church and people: how he dealt with them, how he felt toward them, how he made the very tears of his prophet witness to his own tenderness of heart, with what severity he denounced their sins, with what patience he bore with their long-continued abuse. — *Consoles*.

THE CONNECTION.

Josiah was the last royal hero of Israel. With his death the history of the Jewish monarchy might end, were it not for one great event and one great person that still remain, — the fall of Jerusalem and the prophet Jeremiah. — *Stanley*. The four kings who followed Josiah were the mere puppets of Egypt and Babylon, and the 20 years of their nominal reigns are occupied with successive conquests and deportations. Jehoahaz, the 17th king of Judah, was raised to the throne by the people after Josiah's death, while Pharaoh-necho proceeded on his expedition against Carchemish. Having (it seems) taken that city, he summoned Jehoahaz to Riblah in Hamath (on the Orontes), and there kept him as a prisoner till his return to Egypt. Entering Jerusalem as a conqueror, he placed on the throne Eliakim (the brother of Jehoahaz), to whom he gave the name of Jehoiakim, and imposed a tribute of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold (about \$200,000). Jehoahaz was carried by Pharaoh-necho to Egypt, where he died soon afterward. His brief reign was characterized by wickedness and oppression, but he was lamented as the last king of the people's choice. Jehoiakim, the 18th king of Judah, was 25 years old when he was placed on the throne by Pharaoh-necho, instead of his brother Jehoahaz; and he reigned 11 years at Jerusalem, doing evil in the sight of Jehovah. Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar after reigning for three years as a vassal of Babylon which had defeated the Egyptian king. In the seventh year of his reign Nebuchadnezzar took the field in person. He marched with a part of his forces against Jerusalem, put Jehoiakim to death, as Jeremiah had prophesied, and placed his son Jehoiachin upon the throne (2 Kings 24: 6. Jer. 22: 18, 19). Jehoiachin, Jeconiah, or Coniah, the 19th king of Judah, was eight years old when he was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, and reigned only three months and ten days. Nebuchadnezzar again turned from the siege of Tyre to Jerusalem. The city was saved from a storm by the surrender of Jehoiachin, with his mother Nehushta, and the royal harem, and all his princes and officers. They were all carried off to Babylon with all the mighty men of the country, and all the skilled artisans, none being left behind but the poorest sort of the people. The total number of the captives was 10,000, of whom 7,000 were soldiers, and 1,000 smiths and other craftsmen: it would seem that the royal family, the princes, and the priests, made up the other 2,000. Among the captives were Ezekiel, who had not yet received his prophetic commission, and the grandfather of Mordecai. At the same time all the remaining treasures of the temple and palace were carried off. — *Smith*. Zedekiah, the 20th and last king of Judah, and the youngest son of Josiah, followed Jehoiachin as the vassal of Nebuchadnezzar, at the age of 20, and reigned 11 years.

1 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the second time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

¹ ch. 32: 28.

EXPLANATORY.

1. *Jeremiah*. Four miles north-east of Jerusalem, we at this day find a poor village called Anata. In this we recognize the ancient Anathoth. Here was born the prophet Jeremiah; and this was the place of his usual residence, the near neighborhood of which to Jerusalem sufficiently explains his frequent appearance in the metropolis, the distance being no more than an easy morning walk. He was a priest, and his father's name was Hilkiah. He commenced his prophetic ministry when very young, in the time of King Josiah; and as the high priest who found the book of the law in that

reign bore that name, some have thought that Jeremiah was his son. But there is no other foundation for this than the name, which was a common one among the Jews. — *Kitto*. We possess more copious historical notices of Jeremiah than of any of the other Hebrew prophets. The period at which Jeremiah was invested with the prophetic office was singularly corrupt. Jeremiah was very young when the word of the Lord first came to him (ch. 1: 6). This event took place in the thirteenth year of Josiah. He remained in his native city several years; but at length, in order to escape the persecution of his fellow-townsmen (ch. 11: 24), and even of his own family (ch. 12: 6), he left Anathoth, and took up his residence at Jerusalem. During the reign of Josiah, we may readily believe that Jeremiah would be in no way molested in his work. But in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the prophet was interrupted in his ministry by the priests and prophets, who, with the populace, brought him before the civil authorities, urging that capital punishment should be inflicted on him for his threatenings of evil on the city unless the people amended their ways. Of his history during the eight or nine last years of Jehoiakim, we have no certain account. In the short reign of his successor Jehoiachin, we find him still uttering his voice of warning, though without effect. (See ch. 13: 18. Compare 2 Kings 24: 12, and ch. 22: 24-33). — *Kitto*. Of all the prophets there is not one who so frankly lays open to us his brooding, melancholy nature. Usually we know little or nothing personally of the prophets; but Jeremiah discloses to us his inmost thoughts. And his character is most interesting. We find him sensitive to a most painful degree, timid, shy, hopeless, desponding, constantly complaining and dissatisfied with the course of events, with the office which had been thrust upon him, and with the manner of the divine Providence, but never flinching from his duty. He was not one whose sanguine temperament made him see the bright side of things; nor did he quickly find peace and happiness in doing his Master's will. And yet we find no word of rebuke. The reason of this is that Jeremiah was doing his duty to the utmost extent of his powers. Timid in resolve, he was unflinching in execution; as fearless when he had to face the whole world, as he was dispirited and prone to murmuring when alone with God. We have in Jeremiah a noble example of the triumph of the moral over the physical nature. His whole strength lay in his determination to do what was right at whatever cost. Danger, opposition, mockery, without; fear, despondency, disappointment, within, — availed nothing to shake his constant mind. We can imagine no lot more dreary to a man of intense patriotism like Jeremiah, than to see the ruin of his country steadily approaching; to know the sole remedy, but also to know that none would heed his words. He was required to give up all the innocent joys of life (ch. 15: 17); to abandon the most cherished privilege of a Jew, and to live unmarried (ch. 16: 2); and to abstain even from the civilities and sympathies of society, only to be an object of universal abhorrence, and with none of that success which had so strengthened his predecessors in their labors. Such a lot was beyond the power of any ordinary man. When we think of Elijah's distress in Horeb (1 Kings 19: 10), we see that even that mighty prophet was more fit to confront Ahab in his royal strength at Carmel than to lead a life of daily endurance. — *Cook*. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah continued for a time in the city; but he was afterward carried, against his will, into Egypt, along with his faithful friend and amanuensis, Baruch. There, in the city of Tahpanhes, we have the last clear glimpses of the prophet's life. After this, all is uncertain. On the one hand, there is the Christian tradition, resting doubtless on some earlier belief, that the Jews at Tahpanhes, irritated by his rebukes, at last stoned him to death. On the other side, there is the Jewish statement, that, on the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, he, with Baruch, made his escape to Babylon or Judea, and died in peace. — *Smith*. The second time that the Lord spoke to him in this prison. The first time is given in ch. 32: 1, 2. **Shut up.** It is evident that Zedekiah was well affected towards Jeremiah, for he thrice asked his advice, first by a public embassy (ch. 37: 3), and subsequently in secret (37: 17; 38: 14); but he was far too weak a man to be capable of energetic action in his behalf, and so allowed him to be imprisoned and persecuted. The city had been besieged by the Chaldeans, and was tottering to its fall, when the approach of the Egyptian army gave the inhabitants hope of aid; and for a short time the Chaldeans departed from Jerusalem. Then Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah, asking him to pray unto the Lord for them, probably expecting that he would intercede for the city, as Isaiah had done in the days of Hezekiah (Isa 37: 6). Jeremiah's answer was more unfavorable than he had given before. It was that the Egyptians would accomplish nothing, and that the Chaldeans would return, and take the city. The princes were angry with Jeremiah, smote him, and put him in prison. Zedekiah, on the renewal of the siege, sent and took him out, and secretly ordered him brought to his palace, where he again consulted him, but with the same result. Jeremiah prays for milder treatment. Zedekiah, who was of a kindly disposition, and remembered Jeremiah as an honored prophet in the days of his father, now gives him roomy quarters in the court of the guard, where he wrote the cheerful prophecy contained in chs. 30-33 (a part of which is embraced in our lesson); and, as provisions were growing scarce, he ordered that a loaf of bread should be given him every day. The purpose of the princes was frustrated by his removal to the guard-house, as he was

2 Thus saith the LORD the maker thereof,¹ the LORD that formed it, to establish it; the LORD is his² name;

3 Call³ unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

4 For thus saith the LORD, the

God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are thrown down by the mounts,⁴ and by the sword;

5 They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but⁵ it is to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom

¹ Isa. 37: 26. ² Amos 5: 8; 9: 6. ³ ch. 29: 12. Ps. 91: 15. ⁴ ch. 32: 24. ⁵ ch. 21: 4, 5.

there constantly in contact with the soldiery, and his friends had free access to him. Shortly, therefore, before the capture of the city, they determined upon the prophet's death; and, with the unwilling assent of Zedekiah, he was thrown into a miry pit. — Cook. He was afterwards taken from this horrible place by Ebed-melech, and sent back to the court of the prison, where he remained at the capture of the city. (See chs. 37, 38.) In the court of the prison. Or, the court of the guard, — a part of the king's palace (Neh. 3: 25); probably where the royal guard had its quarters. There would, no doubt, always be a picket on duty in the guard-chamber at the entrance of the court; but in his own apartment Jeremiah was probably left unmolested. — Cook. Prison. In the time of the kings, the prison appears to have been an appendage of the palace, or a special part of it. Later still, it is distinctly described as being in the king's house. This was the case also at Babylon. But private houses were sometimes used as places of confinement, probably much as Chardin describes Persian prisons in his day; namely, houses kept by private speculators for prisoners to be maintained there at their own cost. Public prisons, other than these, though in use by the Canaanitish nations, were unknown in Judæa previous to the captivity. One of the readiest places for confinement was a dry or partially dry well or pit; but the usual place appears, in the time of Jeremiah, and in general, to have been accessible to visitors. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*.

2. Thus saith the Lord, the maker thereof, the Lord that formed it, &c. In this verse we meet the question, What is the antecedent of "thereof" and "it"? The maker of what? The words refer to his acts, not of physical, but of spiritual creation. Hence the meaning of the verse is, "Thus saith the Lord, who will surely create Israel anew, who will faithfully perform those good words of his promise, and will do all that he hath said." — Cowles. According to Canon Cook, the verbs here are simply used impersonally, and mean, "the Lord who makes," "who forms," "who establishes."

3. Call unto me . . . show thee great and mighty things. The Hebrew word here rendered "mighty" does not legitimately mean either strong or great, but high and inaccessible; as of high walls that cannot be surmounted. Hence it denotes here that which the mind cannot readily reach and master, things hard to be understood; as the next clause implies, "which thou knowest not." These mighty things are shown in the following verses. Note here that asking is before receiving; the calling on God in prayer before the answer, and before the showing of great and otherwise dark, unknown things. This is the precious, divine order, designed of God to draw his people very near to himself. — Cowles.

4. Concerning the houses of this city, &c. This verse, with the next, calls the mind to the fearful ruin of Jewish homes and families, in order to give a vivid view of the desolation which is about to fall on the entire city and people. But this vivid view is given only to set off in the stronger light the greatness of the mercy that will surely restore, rebuild, and bless. — Cowles. By the mounts. Rather, "against the mounts." Margin, "engines of shot." High embankments or mounds of earth, raised either on the outside of the walls, from which the besiegers might hurl their missiles of death over the walls, and which threw down the houses, or else those fortifications raised by the Jews for the defence of the city inside of the walls. It was usual in sieges to build such fortifications; and for this purpose houses were pulled down in order to give the room necessary and also to supply material. By the sword, or, "against the sword." Sword is evidently used for all manual weapons, while the ramparts also include the machines erected upon them; so that these two words comprise the totality of the implements of attack. — Lange. Swords (Isa. 13: 10), translated there, axes, are mentioned in Ezek. 26: 9, as used for breaking down the towers in the walls. — Cook.

5. They come; i.e., the Jews. Chaldeans. This is the name which is found appropriated to inhabitants of Babylon and subjects of the Babylonian kingdom. Probably, however, they were the same people that are described in Greek writers as having originally been an uncultured tribe

I have slain in mine anger and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city.

6 Behold, I¹ will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance² of peace and truth.

7 And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as³ at the first.

8 And I will cleanse⁴ them from

all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon⁵ all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.

9 ¶ And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise⁶ and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall⁷ fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.

¹ ch. 30: 17. ² Exod. 34: 6. Isa. 55: 7. John 10: 10. Tit. 3: 5, 6. Heb. 6: 17, 18. 1 Pet. 1: 3. ³ Isa. 1: 26. ⁴ Ezek. 36: 25. Zech. 13: 1. 1 John 1: 9. Rev. 1: 5. ⁵ ch. 31: 34. ⁶ ch. 13: 11. Isa. 62: 7. ⁷ Isa. 60: 5.

of mountaineers, placed on the Carduchian mountains, in the neighborhood of Armenia, whom Xenophon describes as brave and fond of freedom. They appear to have descended on Babylon, made themselves masters of the city and the government, and eventually founded a dominion to which they gave their name, as well as to the inhabitants. — *Kitto's Cyclopædia*. To fill them with the dead bodies. The Jewish soldiers go to fight with the Chaldeans, but with no other result than to fill these houses with their dead, slain of the Lord himself (through the instrumentality of the Chaldeans), for their sins. So distinctly are they to see God's hand in their defeat and ruin. — *Cowles*.

6. I will bring it health and cure. Literally, I will lay upon it a bandage and healing; i.e., a healing bandage, a plaster with healing medicines. — *Cook*. The nation is likened to one who is sick, whom, when he has learned the lessons his sickness should teach, the Lord will bring to health, the normal moral condition of a people, when all parts act right in holiness and in prosperity. I will cure them. The first clause promised that the ruins of the city should be repaired; this gives similar comfort to the inhabitants. — *Cook*. Reveal unto them; i.e., lay open before them. Peace and truth; i.e., genuine, lasting prosperity in abundance. First, truth to God and to righteousness, abundance of the knowledge of God's truth, and obedience to it; and then the natural fruit of truth, peace which flows like a river.

7. The captivity of Judah . . . of Israel to return. The two kingdoms are grouped together in this promise, without respect to their former separation. Israel never returned as a separate kingdom; but many of them joined with the people of Judah in the new kingdom formed after the restoration. This promise refers in part to the return after the 70 years' captivity; but looks for its complete fulfilment to the Messianic times, when all believers in Christ shall belong to the people of promise through Jesus Christ, and shall be restored to the glorious liberty of the gospel. It may look to the final restoration of the Jews to Palestine.

8. Will cleanse them. Behold, see what divine love inspires, and divine power will perform. This city, so terribly cursed by its sins and desolated by the Chaldean armies, I will surely heal and restore. Those great sins I will freely forgive, and those polluted souls I will cleanse. Such is the beginning of this wonderful strain of promise for Zion. — *Cowles*.

9. A name of joy, &c. This deliverance will be so great and so signal as to impress all the heathen nations. The Lord will get to himself honor and praise before them all. They will hear of the great blessings the Lord has brought upon his people, and will fear and tremble before him as one who, being infinite in power to save his people, must be alike infinite in power to overwhelm his foes. — *Cowles*. These promises go on through the chapter; they are great and glorious. They were promised a return after 70 years' captivity; but that was but the beginning of the complete fulfilment which will come through our Lord Jesus Christ.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Jeremiah, who has been denounced as a deserter and traitor, becomes like many others, in the last extremity, the best comforter and counsellor. Demosthenes, who had warned his fellow-countrymen in his earlier days against their excessive confidence, in his later days was the only man who could re-assure their excessive despondency. Herder, who in his earlier days had been been

attacked by contemporary theologians as a heretic, was, as years rolled on, invoked as their only help against the rising tide of unbelief. Let all such, in every age, accept the omen of the mingled darknesses and light which marks the vicissitudes of the career of Jeremiah. — *Stanley*.

II. Out of a prison came Paul's sweetest epistles; out of a prison, "The Pilgrim's Progress" that made Bunyan immortal.

III. I well remember at Camp Convalescent, how, while we were in the hospitals filled with the sick and dying, among the prisoners, sad and foreboding, there sometimes came the sweet music of the band through the open windows. The blessed sounds filled all the air, floated through the prison doors, mingled with the groans of the suffering, touched the heart of the prisoner. So, in this world of sorrow and sickness, comes the sweet music of God's promises, of his words of love, of his visions of the future; and no prison-bars can keep them out.

IV. In some of the most delicate manufactures of this country, the web, in a rude and unsightly state, enters a vessel filled with a certain liquid, passes slowly through, and emerges continuously at the opposite side. As it enters, the cloth seems all of one color, and that one dim and unattractive; as it emerges, it glitters in a variety of brilliant hues arranged in cunning figures, like a robe of needle-work for the adornment of a queen. The liquid through which the fabric passes is composed of certain fiery biting acids; and the reason why it is strained through such a bath is, that in the passage all the deforming and defiling things that have adhered to its surface in preceding processes may be discharged, and the figures, already secretly imprinted, may shine out in their beauty. I have been informed, as I looked curiously on the web in perpetual motion passing through, that if it were allowed to remain one minute too long in the bath, the fabric itself would be destroyed. The manufacturer, skilful and careful, has so tempered the ingredients on the one hand, and timed the passage on the other, that, while the impurities are thoroughly discharged, the fabric comes out uninjured. So the Lord has mingled the ingredients and determined the duration of the trials of his people, so that the defilement of sin may be discharged, and he may be able to bring health and cure. — *Arnott*.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 1.) Good men for their very faithfulness are persecuted by the wicked whom they reprove.

2. No confinement can deprive God's people of his presence. Paul's sweetest epistles were those that date out of a prison. — *Henry*.

3. (Verse 2.) God's creative power a great comfort to his people: they have such a wise and powerful guide and defender.

4. (Verse 3.) Those who expect to receive comforts from God must continue instant in prayer. — *Henry*.

5. God gives us not only greater things, in answer to prayer, than we ask for, but greater than we can even think. Jeremiah had no conception of the ultimate fulfilment of the promises made to him in prison, while a Babylonian army was besieging the city.

6. (Verse 5.) The natural consequences of sin are the expressions of God's feelings toward sin. God is not a dead, impersonal law, but a living spirit, who is full of feeling.

7. No wicked person can see God's face. Their eyes are blinded by sin.

8. (Verse 6.) Sin is like a disease, — an unnatural, disordered state of the soul, working pain and death.

9. Righteousness is like health, — the normal, natural condition of the soul, bringing freedom, peace, enjoyment, and eternal life.

10. (Verse 7.) God is full of mercy as well as severity, of love as well as punishment, in order to draw his people to himself.

11. (Verse 8.) God provides in Jesus Christ the two things that sinners need, — pardon for sin, and cleansing from the sinful nature.

12. It is a joy to God to pardon and restore. He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.

13. God's goodness to his own people makes sinners fear and tremble. And, the more glorious and powerful his works for the good, the more terrible is such a God to those that sin against him.

LESSON IV.—APRIL 28, 1878.

THE RECHABITES.—JER. 35 : 12-19.

TIME. B.C. 604; fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, who reigned B.C. 608-59.

PLACE. Jerusalem. The Rechabites usually lived in tents in the deserts, wandering about from place to place, but now were in Jerusalem for better protection during the insecure times of war.

RULERS. Jehoiakim, king of Judah; Nebuchadnezzar, king of Assyria and Babylon; Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt.

PROPHETS. Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel in Babylon.

Read in connection Jer. 35 : 1-12, and 2 Kings 10 : 15-23.

THE CONNECTION.

After a succession of chapters bearing date in the reign of Zedekiah, viz., 27-29, 32-34, the 35th chapter, in which our lesson is contained, falls back to the reign of Jehoiakim. It treats of the Rechabites, and bases its stern rebuke of Jerusalem and Judah on the noble example of that community.—*Cowles.* Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invades Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and carries away the sacred vessels of the temple, and a large number of captives, among them the young prophet Daniel, to Babylon. But he spares the city at this time. While this invading army of Chaldeans was devastating Judah, the peaceful Rechabites, who were living in tents and pasturing their flocks in the fields, were compelled to go for safety into the walled city of Jerusalem, and were thus brought before Jeremiah and the people as a living example and rebuke.

12 ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

13 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive

instruction¹ to hearken to my words? saith the LORD.

14 The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they

¹ ch. 32 : 33.

EXPLANATORY.

12. **Then came.** When the Rechabites were driven from the fields into Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the notice of the people called to them (verse 11). **Jeremiah.** See Lesson III., note on verse 1.

13. **Thus saith the Lord of hosts.** A title of God often employed: sometimes it is "God of hosts." The word Sabaoth is the Hebrew word for hosts. It sometimes refers to the angels (Eph. 1: 21; 3: 10. Col. 1: 16); sometimes to the stars, as in Jer. 33: 22. Isa. 40: 26; sometimes to the people of Israel, as Exod. 12: 41. God is called the Lord of hosts as being at the head of all these, their king and commander. It expresses his majesty and power. **Go and tell the men of Judah.** Jeremiah, accompanied, as it seems, by the main body of the Rechabites (verses 18, 19), went into one of the courts of the temple, and there addressed to the people the rebuke of which we have the summary in the following verses.—*Cook.* First in the presence of the people offering them wine, which they refused because so commanded by their founder; and then was acted out the rebuke and instruction he was to now utter in words. **Will ye receive instruction?** The mark on the foreheads of all the wise and good is that they are willing and anxious to receive instruction. The best and surest business men are those who have very decided opinions of their own indeed, but who always learn al: they can from others before they make up their opinions. Self-opinionated men are seldom very wise or very good.

14. **Jonadab, the son of Rechab.** Jonadab or Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, appears in the history of Jehu (2 Kings 10: 15-23), as a warm friend of this zealous reformer, and his active supporter in the destruction of the prophets and worshippers of Baal. It may be inferred that he was intimate with the heroic few who had still adhered to the worship of the true God, despite of the almost universal prevalence of idol-worship. He went with Jehu into the house of Baal to search out and

drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding¹ I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me.

15 I² have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets,³ rising up early and sending *them*, saying,

Return⁴ ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye⁵ have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

¹ 2 Chron. 36: 13, 16. ² ch. 7: 13, 25; 25: 3-6. ³ Luke 10: 16. ⁴ 1 Thess. 4: 8. ⁵ ch. 18: 11. ⁶ Luke 13: 34, 35.

remove all the servants of the Lord, so as to leave behind only the worshippers of Baal. The house of Rechab appears yet farther back (1 Chron. 2: 55) as connected with the family of the Kenites. These Kenites are recognized from Judg. 1: 16 and 4: 11-17, and 1 Sam. 15: 6, as the descendants of the father-in-law of Moses. This family accompanied the children of Israel through the wilderness into Canaan. There a portion of them appear in the history of Deborah and Barak, far out on the northern confines of the land (Judg. 4: 11-17). Another family had their residence in southern Judah, as appears in 1 Sam. 15: 6. — *Cowles*. In order to maintain their independence, the Rechabites had no fixed settlements, but led a nomadic life, and so were able to resist any attempt to subdue them. He commanded his sons not to drink wine. Jonadab seeing the danger that the utter dissoluteness of morals in Israel would affect the feeble tribe to which he belonged, he induced his people, or at least his own family, to make a solemn covenant that they would abide by the simple habits that had so long belonged to them. They bound themselves to live in tents and altogether by pasturage. This implied that they were not to sow any seed, not to build houses, not to plant vineyards, not to drink wine. This is a remarkable example of a voluntary agreement, handed down to many generations, to do things that were not naturally obligatory. It was nearly 300 years after these commands of Jonadab that we find the family still keeping this covenant in the days of Jeremiah. So that prophet was directed to teach a lesson to Israel from their constancy. He was directed to offer the children of Jonadab wine to drink (verses 5, 6); not, indeed, that they might drink it, but that they might refuse it. This they at once did, and gave as a reason that Jonadab had commanded them not to do so, and they had always obeyed. — *Lowrie*. When we are told that Jonadab imposed upon this family the obligation never to build houses, but always to dwell in tents, and never to sow corn, or cultivate vineyards, or to drink wine, he did not impose upon them any new law of life, but bound them to the conservation of their then existing and ancient usages. All these, in fact, except the last, are such as belong to this form of life; and the last also now belongs to it among all the tribes of like habit in Western Asia, wine being forbidden to them as to other Moslems. Why Jonadab should have added this to the proper peculiarities of their condition, may be supposed to be that they might not be tempted to plant vineyards in order to obtain wine, and thereby become fixed to particular localities, and insensibly sink into (or rise into) cultivators of the soil. By prohibiting the two principal branches of culture, this was rendered impossible so long as his injunction should be observed. It is possible that the Kenites had, in his time, evinced some disposition to exchange their mode of life for the settled, and, as it may have seemed to them, the more comfortable one of the Hebrews among whom they sojourned, and that Jonadab was averse to this alteration, and took measures to prevent it in the Rechabite branch of the family. There is no reason to suppose that in this he had any religious or ascetic motives, but merely the prudential one which he assigns, — “that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.” This has been variously understood. We take it to mean, that, seeing the land was divided among the tribes and families of Israel, any attempt on their part to become proprietors and cultivators of land would speedily bring them into collision with the Israelites, and end in their expulsion from the country. — *Kitto*. But obey. This was a very dramatic rebuke, as he doubtless pointed to the Rechabites, who had just refused the offered wine, and thus proved their obedience before the people. *Rising early and speaking*. The oft-recurring expression, “rising up early and speaking,” or “sending,” is both beautiful and strong. As a man in earnest and full of his mission is up betimes in the morning to begin, so God represents himself as wakeful and active, giving up the live-long day to his work, laboring with unwearied patience to reclaim and to save his people, but all in vain. — *Cowles*.

15. All my servants the prophets. The Rechabites had had but one lawgiver: the Jews had had a succession of messengers accredited unto them by God. — *Cook*. The strong point which the Lord makes upon this noble example is that this tribe had adhered with unswerving constancy, through so many years, to the precepts of their father Jonadab, the son of Rechab; while

16 Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me:

17 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them:¹ because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called

unto them, but they have not answered.

18 ¶ And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because² ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you:

19 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand³ before me forever.

¹ Prov. 1: 24, &c.; 13: 13; 16: 2. Isa. 65: 12; 66: 4. ² Exod. 20: 12. Eph. 6: 2, 3. ³ ch. 15: 19. Ps. 6: 5. Luke 21: 36.

the Jews had utterly refused to adhere to his precepts, would not listen to his repeated messages and warnings, but spurned them madly away. *They* heard and obeyed a mortal man: *this people* will not hear and obey the eternal God. — *Cowles*. And ye shall dwell in the land. The promise annexed to the fifth commandment, for children who obey their parents, is here given to the children of God who obey their Father in heaven. Both are equally true. The children of Israel were never driven from their land except through their own disobedience. **Inclined your ear.** Reaching forward to the one speaking, as if anxious to know what he commands.

16. **Because the sons of Jonadab.** The obedience of the Rechabites was not the cause of Judah's punishment, though the contrast brought out her disobedience into clearer light. — *Cook*.

17. **Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts.** Judgments are threatened, as often before, against Judah and Jerusalem, for their disobedience. The Rechabites shall rise up in judgment against them, and shall condemn them. — *Henry*. **The evil that I have pronounced against them:** in Deut. 28, Lev. 26, Jer. 25: 8-10. Sinners imagine that, because punishment is delayed, it will not come. But these evils, announced more than 800 years before, came to pass at last.

18, 19. **A man to stand before me.** Upon the Rechabites the Lord pronounces his blessing. Their race shall continue long in favor with God. "To stand before God," is the usual phrase for ministering acceptably in his presence. The tribe of Levi was chosen "to stand before God" (Deut. 10: 8). There is evidence that the Rechabites were adopted into the families of Israel, and recognized as belonging to the tribe of Levi. There is also a series of historical notices which remarkably confirm the promise made here. Thus the Targum of Jonathan, a Chaldee paraphrase on Jeremiah, written near the Christian era, translates our text, "Shall not want a man ministering before me," i.e., performing the service of priest and Levite. His translation makes it highly probable that they were known to be incorporated with the Levites, and acting with them at that time. Hegeppus, a converted Jew who lived at Corinth and at Rome, and who about A.D. 160 wrote a series of memoirs of good men from the crucifixion of Christ to his own time, in giving an account of the martyrdom of James, states that, while the scribes and Pharisees were stoning him, "one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, of the Rechabites who are mentioned by Jeremiah the prophet, cried out, protesting against the crime." This must be accepted as proof that the Rechabites were incorporated among the priests and Levites, and that, up to that day, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, did not lack a man to "stand before God." — *Cowles*. The commands of Jonadab the Rechabite have been kept centuries after his death by his people who are not descendants of Abraham, and who consequently participate in the covenant of promise only mediately and in the second line. Israel, however, has not obeyed the commands of Jehovah, the God of hosts, though they have been presented and inculcated unceasingly by prophets: therefore all the threatenings pronounced by the Lord on Israel shall be fulfilled. But to the Rechabites it is promised that Jonadab shall not want a man to stand before Jehovah. It is said that there are still Rechabites in Asia. — *Lange*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. **The Rechabites.** Benjamin of Tudela, in the twelfth century, mentions that, near El-Jubar, he found Jews who were named Rechabites. They tilled the ground, kept flocks and herds, abstained

from wine and flesh, and gave tithes to teachers who devoted themselves to studying the law and weeping for Jerusalem. They were 100,000 in number. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*.

II. The Rev. Joseph Wolff says, "On my arrival at Mesopotamia, some Jews that I saw there pointed out to me one of the ancient Rechabites. He stood before me, wild, like an Arab, holding the bridle of his horse in his hand. I showed him the Bible in Hebrew and Arabic; which he was much rejoiced to see, as he could read both languages, but had no knowledge of the New Testament. After having proclaimed to him the tidings of salvation, and made him a present of the Hebrew and Arabic Bibles and Testaments, I asked him, 'Whose descendant are you?' — 'Mousa,' said he bristlingly, 'is my name; and I will show you who were my ancestors;' on which he immediately began to read from the 5th to the 11th verses of Jer. 35. 'Where do you reside?' said I. Turning to Gen. 10: 2, he replied, 'At Hadoram, now called Simar by the Arabs; at Uzal, now called Sanan by the Arabs;' and again referring to the same chapter, verse 30, he continued, 'At Mesha, now called Mecca, in the deserts around those places. We drink no wine, and plant no vineyard, and sow no seed, and live in tents, as Jonadab our father commanded us. Hobab was our father too. Come to us, and you will find us 60,000 in number; and you see thus the prophecy has been fulfilled, 'Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever;'" and saying this, Mousa the Rechabite mounted his horse, and fled away, and left behind a host of evidence in favor of sacred writ."

III. Lately some further information respecting this interesting people has been furnished by Rabbi Joseph Schwartz, in his "Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine," published at Philadelphia in 1850. After showing that the Rechabites eventually settled in Yemen, he says, "There are many traces of them at present: they live entirely isolated, will not be recognized, and shun, or rather hate, all intercourse and every connection with the other Jews. They only sojourn in Arabia, and for the most part on the western shores of the Red Sea, and are engaged solely in the raising of cattle. They always appear on horseback, and armed; and people assert that they have noticed the fringes commanded in Scripture on their covering and clothes. They are occasionally seen in Palestine, but very seldom, and then, as it were, in secrecy and unrecognized. Some even say that several have been met within Jerusalem, but never make themselves known; although the reason of this singular silence, and the anxious desire to escape detection, has remained hitherto a profound secret. At the same time it is clearly ascertained that they are Jews in every sense of the word, — live according to the Jewish laws, and also possess some knowledge of the learned rabbis who flourished in the early ages of the Christian era." The result of the whole seems to be, that this people is known to the Arabs only as Jews. — whence also the reports of travellers who derive their accounts from Arabian information. But those who derive their information from Jewish sources recognize them as Rechabites, which they claim to be themselves, and are unwilling to be taken for Jews in their own country, resting more upon the rights of their Arabian descent than upon the degree in which they have adopted the Jewish religion, while proud of the testimony which the monuments of that religion bear to their history and their faithfulness. — *Kittó*.

IV. **Loyalty to God as to man.** One of the most brilliant and touching stories ever written is Rev. E. E. Hale's tale of "The Man without a Country," where a young naval officer is represented as punished for some crime by being transferred from ship to ship, and never allowed to step on his native shore, nor see a newspaper, nor hear one word from his native land. He grew old thus, till it became a fearful punishment; and to one who uttered some careless word against his native land, the "man without a country" burst out with, "If you are ever tempted to say a word or do a thing that shall put a bar between you and your family, your home, and your country, pray God in his mercy to take you that instant to his own heaven. And for your country, boy" (and the words rattled in his throat), "and for that flag, never dream a dream but of serving her as she bids you, though that service carry you through a thousand hells. No matter what happens to you; no matter who flatters you, or who abuses you: remember that behind all these men is the country herself, — your country, and that you belong to her as to your own mother." How much more sad to be without a heavenly country, a Father, and a home above! How much more terrible to be disloyal to God, and by disobedience long continued never to have part in that better country!

PRACTICAL.

1. **The word of the Lord (verse 12).** God's word comes to us as really as to Jeremiah, although in a different way. He speaks to us by his word; and the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth, if we listen and obey.

2. **Will ye not (verse 13).** God does not *compel* us to love and serve him; but he *invites* us most earnestly, and persuades us, drawing us by the cords of love.

3. **Rechabites** (verse 14). From them we learn a lesson of temperance. In this respect, we ought to be Rechabites. (Prov. 23: 29-32.)

4. We learn also a lesson of obedience to parents and rulers, and from this a lesson of obedience to God. Those that are trained to obey parents will usually obey God. Those that disobey parents always disobey God.

5. **Ye hearkened not** (verses 14 and 16). Morality (right conduct toward men, toward parents and rulers), instead of being sufficient without love to God, takes away all excuse for not loving and obeying God. The fact that we know what obedience and love and honor and honesty are, from our practising them toward men, shows that we can exercise them toward God; and our very human obedience will rise up in the judgment against us, and condemn us, for not obeying and loving and honoring God.

6. **I have sent** (verse 15). God condemns no man till he has done all he can for his salvation. He warns and entreats men.

7. Our first duty is to repent, and to return to God. Evil is a state far from God: to repent is to return and draw near to God.

8. God would persuade men to come to him by large and abundant promises to the obedient. Only in serving and loving God is salvation and prosperity.

9. **Therefore** (verse 17). The reason men are not saved lies only in themselves: "Ye will not come unto me." They alone are to blame.

10. But, if men will not repent, they must suffer the consequences. It is not possible to be saved in disobedience and sin. The "nature of things" will not suffer it to be.

11. God's fulfilment of his promises is proof that he will also perform what he threatens. One is as sure as the other.

12. **Before me forever** (verse 19). The blessings of obedience, the curse of disobedience, are eternal. We can never know where will be the end of any action.

13. The righteous are a blessing not only to themselves, but to posterity; and all the coming ages are better for their living.

LESSON V.—MAY 5, 1878.

THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH.—JER. 52: 1-11.

TIME. B.C. 587-6. (Lange and others, 589-8.)

PLACE. Jerusalem and vicinity.

RULERS. Zedekiah, king of Judah; Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; Pharaoh Hophra (Apries), king of Egypt.

PROPHETS. Daniel and Ezekiel, in Babylon; Jeremiah, in Jerusalem.

Read ch. 39, 2 Kings 25, 2 Chron. 36, Ezek. 17: 1-21.

CONNECTION.

Zedekiah, the 20th and last king of Judah, and the youngest son of Josiah and Hamutal, was 20 years old at his accession, and reigned 11 years, till the final destruction of Jerusalem. The only events of his reign, except the brief record of the fall of Jerusalem, are those connected with the history of Jeremiah, from whose book we learn the spirit of the times.—*Cowles*. Although Nebuchadnezzar set up Zedekiah as king, he left him but little more than the shadow of a throne to sit on. All the treasures of the temple, as well as of the palace, were taken; and even the golden vessels that remained in the house of the Lord were cut up and sent away. He sent away to Babylon, besides the deposed king and his courtiers, all the chief inhabitants of Jerusalem, to the number of 10,000, with all "the mighty of the land,"—comprising 7,000 of the most able warriors with 1,000 of the best artisans. The Mordecai of Esther's history, and the future prophet Ezekiel, were among the captives. It is distinctly stated that Nebuchadnezzar took a solemn oath of Zedekiah to remain in honorable allegiance to the prince who had placed him on the throne; and this oath he kept so long as he had no temptation to break it. But temptation came, as usual, from the side of Egypt, which had now king Pharaoh-Hophra, the Apries of the Greek historians, whose active and enterprising character, with the success of his warlike enterprises, suggested that he would be able and willing to afford efficient aid against the Chaldeans. Jeremiah, the prophet, perceived this inclination, and warned the king of the consequences. But eventually,

in the ninth year of his reign, after having entered into a secret compact with the Egyptian king, Zedekiah went into open revolt. This soon brought the king of Babylon, with a most powerful army, before Jerusalem; and a regular siege was commenced, by the building of forts and other military works outside the town. Eager longings were directed towards Egypt; and the Egyptians were actually on the march for its relief. This compelled Nebuchadnezzar to raise the siege in order to meet this new enemy. It is uncertain whether a battle was fought or not. The impression seems to be, that, on becoming acquainted with the force of the Chaldeans, the Egyptians declined to risk an action that was certain to be bloody, and probably disastrous, in behalf of the Jewish king; and therefore drew back to their own country, leaving Nebuchadnezzar to pursue his plans at leisure. So when the people of Jerusalem beheld the dust of an advancing army, and were prepared to hasten forth to greet their deliverers, they found, with bitter disappointment, that the Chaldeans had returned to resume the siege of the city. — *Kitto*.

1 Zedekiah¹ was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name

was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

2 And he did that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD, ac-

¹ 2 Kings 24: 18.

EXPLANATORY.

Chapter 52 forms an historical appendix to the book of Jeremiah, giving additional details to those contained in ch. 39, of the capture of Jerusalem, which is the central point of his predictions. The last words of the foregoing chapter affirm that Jeremiah was not the author. — *Cook*. There is no serious objection to the supposition that this chapter was placed here by some compiler of Jeremiah's prophecies; perhaps, and even probably, Ezra.

1. **Zedekiah.** His original name had been Mattaniah, which was changed to Zedekiah by Nebuchadnezzar. Jerusalem might have remained the head of the Babylonian province of Judah, and the temple of Jehovah continued standing, had Zedekiah possessed wisdom and firmness enough to remain true to his allegiance to Babylon. This, however, he could not do. His history is contained in the short sketch of the events of his reign given in 2 Kings 24: 17 to 25: 7. Jer. 39: 1-7. 2 Chron. 36: 10; and also in Jer. chs. 21, 24-29, 32-34, and 37, 38; and Ezek. 17: 1-21. Zedekiah was a man not so much bad at heart as weak in will. He was one of those unfortunate characters, frequent in history, like Charles I. of England, and Louis XVI. of France, who find themselves at the head of affairs during a great crisis, without having the strength of character to enable them to do what they know to be right, and whose infirmity becomes moral guilt. **Mother's name was Hamutal.** She was one of the wives of King Josiah, and mother of Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23: 31), as well as of Zedekiah. **Daughter of Jeremiah.** Spoken of in 2 Kings 23: 31; nothing further is known of him. **Libnah.** One of the royal cities of the Canaanites taken by Joshua. It was in Judah, 30 miles south-west of Jerusalem.

2. **Evil that Jehoiakim had done.** Jehoiakim, originally called Eliakim, was the second son of Josiah, and eighteenth king of Judah. He occupied the position of a vassal of the Egyptian empire, and in that capacity had to lay upon the people heavy imposts to pay the appointed tribute. But he aggravated the public calamity by a degree of luxury and magnificence in his establishments and structures very ill suited to the condition of his kingdom and the position which he occupied. Hence much extortion and wrong-doing, much privation and deceit; and when we add to this a general forgetfulness of God, and proneness to idolatry, we have the outlines to that picture which the prophet Jeremiah has drawn in the most sombre hues. — *Kitto*. The king himself, by enforced labor, enlarged his palace, roofed it with cedar, painted it with vermilion, as if the evil day was still far off, and he could rest securely under the protection of the Egyptian power whose heavy tribute he exacted from his unwilling subjects. He remained fixed in the recollections of his countrymen, as the last example of those cruel, selfish, luxurious princes the natural product of Oriental monarchies, the disgrace of the monarchy of David. — *Stanley*. The idol-worship which Jehoahaz had tolerated once more grew and spread with great rapidity under Jehoiakim. All the abominations which had existed under Manasseh re-appeared. He was the tool of the heathen party; he not only did not listen to the prophets, he hated and persecuted them. He caused the prophet Urijah, who had fled from him to Egypt, to be brought back from thence, and to be put to death. Jeremiah barely escaped death. 2 Kings 24: 3, 4, also shows that he shed much innocent blood. — *Lange*. It appears from Ezekiel as well as Chronicles, that, towards the

cording to all that Jehoiakim had done.

3 For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

4 ¶ And¹ it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about.

¹ ch. 39: 1. 2 Kings 25: 1.

close of Zedekiah's reign, idolatrous rites of several different kinds were intruded into the sacred precincts of the temple (Ezek. 8: 7-18. 2 Chron. 36: 14).

3. Through . . . anger of . . . Lord . . . Zedekiah rebelled. His "anger" against Jerusalem, determining him to "cast out" his people "from his presence" heretofore manifested there, led him to permit Zedekiah to rebel (2 Kings 23: 26, 27. Cf. Exod. 9: 12; 10: 1. Rom. 9: 18). That rebellion, being in violation of his oath, was sure to bring down God's vengeance (2 Chron. 36: 13. Ezek. 17: 15, 16, 18). — *J. F. and B.* In regard to Zedekiah's rebellion, see connection.

4. In the tenth month . . . the tenth day. The nation never forgot the month and the day on which the armies of Chaldaea finally invested the city. It was in January, on the tenth day of the tenth month. It was felt as the day of the deepest gloom by the Israelite exiles (Ezek. 24: 1-27). It has been commemorated as a fast, the fast of Tebeth, ever since, in the Jewish Church. Round the walls were reared the gigantic mounds by which Eastern armies conducted their approaches to besieged cities, and which were surmounted by forts overtopping the walls. To make room for these, the houses which the kings of Judah had built outside for pleasant retreats were swept away. The vassal kings of Babylon had their thrones planted in view of each of the gates. — *Stanley.* From Ezek. 24: 1, we find that, on the very day when the host of Nebuchadnezzar made its appearance before Jerusalem, the fact was revealed to Ezekiel in Babylonia, where he had been carried captive, and the fate of the city announced to him (verses 6-14). Nebuchadnezzar. Another form of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was a prince of extraordinary talents and energy; and he consolidated, if we may not say that he actually established, the Babylonian monarchy. Having destroyed Nineveh, his next task was to recover that portion of his new conquest which the Egyptians had held in possession for two or three years. He met the king of Egypt, who came out to defend his possessions at Carchemish, on the Euphrates, and totally defeated him. He afterwards made Jehoiakim tributary, taking away certain captives. He also took captive Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim (see connection). — *Lange.* Babylon. See Lesson XII., 1st quarter, on verse 11; Lesson VII., 2d quarter, on verse 7. He and all his army. Nebuchadnezzar was not present at the storming of Jerusalem (Jer. 39: 3-5. 2 Kings 25: 6): he awaited the result in his camp. — *Lange.* Nebuchadnezzar, who was at the same time conducting two great sieges, those of Jerusalem and of Tyre, found it best to fix his headquarters at Riblah (in the northern part of Canaan, on the Orontes, in the territory of Hamath), whence he could most conveniently superintend the operations against both cities. In the absence of the monarch, the siege of Jerusalem was continued by a number of his officers (ch. 39: 3, 13). — *Cook.* Against Jerusalem. The army seems to have at first spread itself over all Judaea. It fought not only against Jerusalem, but "against all the cities of Judah that were left," and especially against Lachish and Azekah (ch. 34: 7), two cities of the south, which had probably been strongly garrisoned in order to maintain the communication with Egypt. This division of the Babylonian forces encouraged the Egyptians to make an effort. After the siege of Jerusalem had continued for a certain time, news arrived that Ilophra, king of Egypt, had put his troops in motion, and was advancing to the relief of his Jewish allies (ch. 37: 6). On hearing this, Nebuchadnezzar, who saw the importance of concentrating his forces, broke up from before Jerusalem, and marched away to the south. There he probably effected a junction with the detachments which were besieging Azekah and Lachish, thus saving them from destruction, and showing to the Egyptians his readiness to give them battle. It appears that the display was enough. They returned into their own country. Nebuchadnezzar then led back his army, and once more invested the city. — *Cook.* Built forts. Rather, towers of wood (*Kimchi*), for watching the movements of the besieged from the height, and annoying them with missiles. — *J. F. and B.* Movable towers, sometimes provided with battering-rams. Such towers are seen in the Assyrian sculptures. — *Cook.*

5 So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

6 And in the fourth month, in the ninth *day* of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land.

7 Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night

by the way of the gate between the two walls, which *was* by the king's garden (now the Chaldeans *were* by the city round about): and they went by the way of the plain.

8 ¶ But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him.

5. **Unto the eleventh year.** The siege continued about a year and a half, not reckoning the short time during which the Chaldeans broke up to give battle to the army of Pharaoh. — *Henderson.*

6. **In the fourth month.** Answering to July—still kept as a fast by the Jewish nation. **The famine was sore.** That the city yielded only to famine,—famine which brought pestilence in its train,—is apparent from many passages of Jeremiah (21: 7-9; 32: 24; 39: 9). The intensity of the suffering endured may be gathered from Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Josephus. The complexions of the men grew black with famine (Lam. 4: 8); their skin was shrunk and parched; the rich and noble women searched the dung-hills for scraps of offal (Lam. 4: 5); the children perished for want, or were even devoured by their parents (Lam. 2: 20; 4: 3; 4: 10. Ezek. 5: 10); water was scarce, as well as food, and was sold at a price (Lam. 5: 4); a third part of the inhabitants died of the famine, and the plague which grew out of it (Ezek. 5: 12). — *Cook.* **No bread.** See Jer. 38: 9, and compare the prophecies of Ezekiel (Ezek. 4: 16; 5: 16).

7, 8. **The city was broken up.** Broken into; i.e., a breach was made in the walls, and the city was entered at midnight (Josephus; Ezek. 12: 2-12). The entrance was effected by the northern gate. Through the darkness of the night, lit up, if at all, only by the nine days' moon, the Chaldean guards silently made their way from street to street, till they suddenly appeared in the centre of the temple court, in the middle gateway which opened directly on the great brazen altar. Never before had such a spectacle been seen in the inviolable sanctuary of Jerusalem. Then the sleeping city woke. A clang and cry resounded through the silent precincts at that dead hour of night. The first victims were those who, whether from religious or superstitious feelings and duties, were habitually occupants of the sacred buildings. The virgin marble of the courts ran red with blood, like a rocky winepress in the vintage. (Lam. 1: 15.) — *Stanley.* **All the men of war fled,** &c. The alarm soon spread to the palace. In the twilight of the early summer dawn, these dreadful scenes were dimly discerned from the palace below; and, before the sun had risen, the king, with his wives and children and the royal guard, escaped, not by any of the regular gates, but by a passage broken through a narrow alley confined between two walls, at the south-eastern corner of the city, which the Chaldean army had not been able completely to invest. They passed out with their heads muffled, either for disguise, or to express their sense of the greatness of the calamity, and bearing on their shoulders such articles of value as they hoped to save. As in the case of David, the object of the king was to escape to the east of the Jordan. He and his companions descended, unobserved, by the royal gardens, and down the steep descent to Jericho. There he was overtaken by the Chaldean soldiers, who had received intelligence of his flight from deserters; and in that wide plain, the scene of the first triumph of Joshua, was fought the last fight of the expiring monarchy. His troops fled, and were scattered to the winds. — *Stanley.* **By the way of the gate.** Jerusalem was anciently divided into two parts. This gate was from the upper city, comprehending Mount Zion, to the lower city (*north* of the former and much lower); it was into the latter (the *north* side) the Chaldeans forced an entry, and took up their position opposite the gate of the "middle" wall, between the lower and upper city. Zedekiah fled in the opposite, i.e., the *south* direction. — *J. F. and B.* **Two walls.** Zedekiah might have held the upper city longer; but want of provisions drove him to flee by the double wall *south* of Zion, towards the plains of Jericho, in order to escape beyond Jordan to Arabia Deserta. He broke an opening in the wall to get out (Ezek. 12: 12). — *Id.* **The king's garden.** The "gate" to it from the upper city above was appropriated to the kings alone; "stairs" led down from Mount Zion and the palace to the king's garden below (Neh. 3: 15). — *Id.* **Chaldeans.** See Lesson III., on verse 5, second quarter. **By way of the plain.** The plains of Jericho, verse 8 **Riblah.** See note on verse 4.

9. **Gave judgment upon him:** lit., "spoke judgments with him;" i.e., brought him to trial as

9 Then¹ they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah, in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him.

10 And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes :

he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah.

11 Then² he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

¹ ch. 32: 4, 5. ² Ezek. 12: 13.

a common criminal, not as a king. He had violated his oath (Ezek. 17: 13-19. 2 Chron. 36: 13). — *J. F. and B.*

10. Slew the sons of Zedekiah. The punishment of Zedekiah was doubly cruel; first, his being made to witness the execution of his own sons, and then his being deprived of sight, so that the last scenes impressed upon him would be the death agonies of his children.

11. Put out the eyes of Zedekiah. Literally, "dug out." Extinction of the sight was not allowed as a punishment under the Mosaic law, but was commonly employed in the East against such as were in a position to have engaged in plots against the existing government. The same wicked custom still prevails. Mr. Roberts, speaking of this practice, says, "The eyes of many were plucked out by hooks; others had the sight destroyed by powerful drugs; and some had their eyelids sewn together, as is the custom with hunting hawks." — *Biblical Treasury*. Prison: lit., "the house of visitations," or punishments; i.e., where there was penal work enforced on the prisoners, as grinding. — *J. F. and B.* There was a long suspense at Jerusalem. It was not till nearly a month had elapsed, the tenth day of the fifth month, that Nebuzaradan, captain of the royal guard, came with orders from Nebuchadnezzar to put the finishing stroke to the work of destruction. The temple, the palace, the houses of the nobles, were deliberately set on fire. The very bones and framework of Jerusalem appeared to be wrapped in flames. The walls and gates seemed to lament and cry, as they sunk into the earth. The sepulchres, even the consecrated catacombs of the kings, were opened, and the bodies thrown out to the vultures and beasts of prey, which flocked to their frightful feast outside the walls. Jackals wandered even over the sacred hill of Zion. Some of the princes were hung up by their hands on the temple walls: others were carried off to execution at Riblah, including the two chief priests and other great officers of the court and camp that were found in the city. The havoc and carnage in the streets were such that passers-by avoided every one they met, lest they should be defiled by their bloody touch. Age and youth, men and women, alike fell victims to the passion or cruelty of the conqueror. — *Stanley*. The two great moral results sought by means of this destruction of city and temple, and of this seventy years' captivity, were, 1, to cure the nation of idolatry; 2, to break down this false reliance on the mere externals of their religious system. The whole book of Ezekiel should be read with these points in mind. Every chapter, almost every verse, shines in the light of these truths, and bears to their illustration. — *Cowles*. Zedekiah's end was the end of the royal house of David and of the Israelitish monarchy. This dynasty had remained on the throne for nearly 500 years; while in the seceded kingdom of the ten tribes, within a period of 250 years, nine dynasties of nineteen kings reigned, of which each one dethroned and extirpated the preceding one. — *Lange*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Bearing in mind that it was never the thought of God to forsake his people utterly, and forget forevermore his promises to Abraham, and the mercies made sure to David, but was rather his purpose to replant the land of promise, we may note with admiration the wisdom of his sifting processes: first, in taking away the better elements into Babylon, leaving behind in Judæa the men who had sunk physically and morally so low as to be of no particular account as elements of society. When seventy years had transpired, and the Lord put it into the heart of Cyrus to invite the Jews to return, the sifting process was again put in requisition, this time by making it a *call for volunteers*. The willing, the earnest and true-hearted, — not the easy-going and indifferent, — would respond to this call; the men of moral heroism who could welcome sacrifice and hardship for the love they bore to the land of their fathers' sepulchres, and for their faith in the yet unfulfilled promises of his covenant. Some one has said that in looking for seed to plant New England, two and a half centuries ago, the Lord sifted two kingdoms (England and Holland) for the best they had. With equal truth it may be said that the Lord of providence, on the same wise principle, sifted the Jewish people twice over to get out the best seed for replanting the land of promise. — *Cowles*.

II. Going on in sin with the consequences before their eyes. See Charles Lamb's confessions of a drunkard, *Essays of Elia*, p. 271.

III. The long-suffering of God. There was a prince in Italy who was one of the most merciful that ever ruled a nation, but at the same time a terrible punisher of wickedness when once he rose to do justice. Among his servants there was one who abused his goodness by numerous transgressions. He was an oppressor of the poor, quarrelsome with all his fellow-servants, and neglectful of his duties to his master. The prince had several times kindly but seriously rebuked him; but, as the servant found that punishment never followed, he became impudent and reckless. One day he caused a fellow-servant's death. He entreated his master's pardon, and his master for gave him once more. He now thought he could do any thing. So one morning he ventured to appear before his master with his hat on. The prince, in a calm voice, asked him why he thus came covered into his presence. The answer was, that he had caught a cold. "I will take care," said he, "that you never catch a cold again. Call the officer of the guard." The servant soon came with that personage. "Take that man to prison," the prince said, "and order the executioner to nail his hat to his head." One of the prince's friends expressed his surprise at this severe sentence, seeing that the servant had been pardoned for more serious crimes. The prince took a goblet, and, having half filled it with water, requested his friend to put an apple into it. This made the water rise to the brim. The prince thereupon told his friend to drop in a coin. This made the water to run over. "How is it?" the prince asked, "that the small coin caused the water to run over, whereas the large apple raised it only to the brim?" The long-suffering of God is very great, but it has its limits; and when matters have risen to such a height as to cause the cup of God's patience to flow over, that same God who is "slow to anger" proves a God of great power, who will not at all acquit the guilty. — *Biblical Treasury*.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 1.) Weakness in a ruler is often a crime. Goodness would have made him strong, and saved both him and the city.
2. (Verse 2.) Sinners continue to sin against God, with all the consequences of others' sin plain before their eyes. They will not learn even by example.
3. All prophets, all warnings, are in vain to keep some sinners from ruin.
4. (Verse 3.) God punishes sin by permitting it to work out its legitimate fruits.
5. Sin becomes incurable at last; no hope, no possibility, of escape.
6. False to God becomes false to man.
7. (Verse 4.) Wicked men become the instruments of God in punishing other wicked men.
8. The terrible results of sin. Long after the beginning of sin, against every warning and influence, the sin goes on, and punishment comes at last. The worst punishment of sin is always future punishment long after the sin.
9. "The mills of God grind slow, but grind to powder." "God comes with leaden feet, but strikes with iron hands."
10. Bad rulers bring a curse upon their people.
11. (Verses 8, 9.) There is no escape from the judgments of God.
12. The sinner is condemned both by God and man.
13. Blind and in prison, but the vision of his sins and calamities ever before him; this king is a type of sinners, when their sin brings forth its fruit.
14. But even here there is mercy. The nation shall be restored. God's love and mercy never fail. And even by this punishment good came. It was the only way to cure them of idolatry, and cleanse and sift the people, that the chaff might be destroyed, and good wheat return for a new harvest.

LESSON VI.—MAY 12, 1878.

THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON.—DAN. 1: 8-17.

TIME. B.C. 605-603. Daniel lived from about B.C. 620 till after B.C. 534.

PLACE. Babylon, capital of the Babylonian Empire, now near its height of glory, including "the universal sovereignty of Western Asia and Egypt."

RULERS. Jehoiakim, king of Judah, but tributary to Babylon; Nebuchadnezzar, king of

Babylon, began to reign Jan. 21, 604 B.C.; Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt; Cyaxares Ahasuerus), king of Media.

PROPHETS. Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Obadiah.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

The book of Daniel, as also the book of Ezra, is written partly in Hebrew, and partly in the Chaldee, a language differing from the Hebrew in its form and structure, but not much more than Italian or Spanish differs from Latin. Any one who understands Latin may easily master either of the two former languages; and any one who understands Hebrew has the key that unlocks all the cognate Oriental languages. This language begins at ch. 2: 4, where the Chaldeans, who spoke Aramæan, or Chaldee, say to the king in "Syriac," which is the same dialect, and which was spoken by our Lord and by the Jews of his day, "O king, live forever!" — *Rev. John Cummings, D.D.* The language is about one-half Hebrew; and the remainder (ch. 2: 4 through ch. 7) is in the Aramæan or Chaldee idiom. Ezra is the only book of the Old Testament which shares this peculiarity of language. — *Zochler.* The book is divided into two nearly equal parts. The first (chs. 1-6) contains chiefly historical incidents; the second (chs. 7-12) is entirely apocalyptic (containing visions and revelations of the future). Or, better, into three parts: the first chapter forms an introduction; the next six (2-7) give a general view of the progressive history of the powers of the world, as seen in the events of the life of Daniel; the remainder of the book (8-12) traces in minuter detail the fortunes of the people of God, as typical of the fortunes of the church in all ages. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary.* It is scarcely conceivable that a writer should purposely write one book in two languages, though there may have been an obvious reason why he should treat in separate records of events of general history in the vernacular (Chaldee), and of the special fortunes of God's people in Hebrew. — *B. F. Westcott.* There is every reason to believe that these records in the different languages were brought together in his later years by Daniel himself. I feel prepared to aver with open face and without fear of contradiction, that there is no book in the Old Testament whose antiquity and genuineness are better vouched for than that of Daniel. — *Moses Stuart.* Profane history locates Nebuchadnezzar precisely here, coming to the throne of Babylon in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the very year of the first great deportation of captives, and reigning forty-three years. Berosus records that, "having conquered the Jews, he burned the temple at Jerusalem, and removing the entire people from their homes, transported them to Babylon." More details on the Chaldean side would probably have come down to our age if the monuments of Babylon had been as enduring as those of Nineveh. — *Crookes.*

THE CONNECTION.

In the third year of his reign (Dan. 1: 1) King Jehoiakim was besieged in Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. Jeremiah (25: 1) says the fourth year. The simplest explanation is that the advance of Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon began in the third year of Jehoiakim, but that Jerusalem was not taken till the fourth. — *Smith.* Being constrained to submit, Jehoiakim was, by order of Nebuchadnezzar, laden with chains, with the purpose of sending him away to Babylon. But the conqueror afterwards relented, and restored to him his crown. Many persons of high family, and some even of the royal blood, were, however, sent away to Babylon, together with a portion of the treasures and sacred vessels of the temple, which were placed in the temple of Belsus. This was the first Babylonish captivity, and was about seven years prior to that in which the same king, together with the prophet Ezekiel, was carried into exile. This was the first-fruits of that vintage which left the vine of Israel bare. — *Kittos.* At the same time Nebuchadnezzar commissioned Ashpenaz, the chief of his eunuchs, to choose a number of royal and noble Hebrew youths, excelling alike in beauty and mental accomplishments, to be brought up at his court, and trained in the learning of Chaldaea. Among those thus selected were Daniel, with his three companions, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah. — *Smith.* But the king of Babylon not only wished to unteach Daniel his Christianity, but, in order to detach him still more completely from his Hebrew associations, he changed his name. He had the more reason for doing so in this case, because the names of each of the three children had "God" in it, and thus served to remind them of the religion they professed. But every name which the Chaldean monarch gave them was either merely civil and social, or contained an allusion actually idolatrous. "Daniel," for instance, signifies "God my judge;" "Hananiah," the original of the Latin "John," means "grace of Jehovah;" "Mishaël," "asked of God;" "Azariah," "the Lord is my keeper." These names were to the exiled youths witnesses for God, and mementoes of the faith of their fathers. The king of Babylon, therefore, called Daniel "Belteshazzar," which means, "the treasurer of the god Bel;" Hananiah he called "Shadrach," "the messenger of the king;" and Mishaël he called "Meshach," a name denoting "a devotee of the god Shesach;" and Azariah had his name changed into "Abed-nego," which signifies, "the servant of Nego," one of the gods of Babylon. Thus Nebuchadnezzar heathenized

their names, in hopes that he might thereby be the better able to heathenize their hearts. But in this he was mistaken. The Hebrew youths quietly took the names assigned them, just as Christians have ever taken patiently the reproaches of the world, and borne them joyfully. The king of Babylon, we read, yet further to identify these four Hebrew youths with himself and his religion, sent them food from the royal table. We know that this was a mark of great generosity. It was, as it were, saying to these Hebrew youths, "If you will become priests of our temple, we will give you an endowment from the state." — *Cummings*.

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion¹ of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

9 Now God had brought Daniel

¹ Deut. 32: 38. Ezek. 4: 13. Hos. 9: 3.

EXPLANATORY.

8. Daniel. Daniel was descended from one of the highest families in Judah, if not one of the royal blood. His birthplace was probably Jerusalem. Of his first years nothing is recorded. His age when carried to Babylon was probably somewhere about 12 to 15 years. (*Cummings* makes him 16 or 17 then, and about 20 when he appeared before the king after his three years' training.) Daniel received a thorough education, and was especially instructed in the science of the Chaldeans, and in speaking and writing their language. He had before evidently been carefully trained in Hebrew learning, and was thoroughly imbued with the principles of the religion of his fathers. After the lapse of three years spent in this course of discipline, Daniel passed the examination which was necessary to admit him to the royal favor. One of his first acts was the interpretation of a dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Considerably later in his reign we find Daniel interpreting another dream of his. Under the immediate successor of Nebuchadnezzar — Evil-merodach — Daniel appears to have been forgotten. His situation at court appears to have been confined to an inferior office. We lose sight of him until the reign of Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon. After the conquest of Babylon by the Medes and Persians, under the reign of Darius, or Cyaxares, Daniel was raised again to exalted station. In the third year of Cyrus he had a vision, or series of visions. Beyond this nothing certain is known of Daniel. How long he lived, and where he died, are points on which no certain information can now be obtained. — *Barnes (condensed)*. He is supposed to have died at Shusan, or Susa, in Persia, aged about 94; his age being the probable reason why he returned not to Judæa with other Hebrew captives under the proclamation of Cyrus, which marked the close of the 70 years' captivity. — *Uriah Smith*. **Would not defile himself.** There were several grounds on which a conscientious Jew might regard himself polluted by partaking of food so provided. In the first place, the dietary might, and probably did, comprise articles of food — such as the flesh of swine, hares, &c. — which the law interdicted to the Israelites; or, even if of lawful kinds, the law required the animals to be very perfectly cleared of blood. Yet further, it was customary among most ancient nations to make an oblation to their gods of some part of what they ate or drank, as a thankful acknowledgment that the good things they enjoyed were their gift. This stood, then, with them in the place which our grace before meat occupies; ascribing to them the honor due only to the one Lord of heaven and earth. Yet more, the heathen — as indeed did the Jews — used for food animals that had actually been offered in sacrifice at the altar of their gods; and, in eating meat presented to him by the heathen, a Jew could feel no certainty that he might not be partaking of that which had been offered to idols. — *Kittó*. Again, they were restrained from partaking of the food and drink offered to them, by a regard to the principles of temperance in which they were educated, and by fear of the consequences which would follow indulgence. New scenes and temptations were opening before them. They were among strangers. They were noticed and flattered. They had an opportunity of indulging in the pleasures of the table, such as captive youths rarely enjoyed. Rare has been the stern virtue among young men, which could resist such strong allurements, in a great city, in a foreign land, flattered by those in higher walks of life. — *Barnes*. **The king's meat** (see verse 5). Delicacies, luxurious food, of which, according to Oriental custom, not only noble guests, but also all servants and officials, were accustomed to partake. — *Zochler*. **Prince of the eunuchs.** Ashpenaz (horse-nose), verse 3; an important and influential officer of the palace at Oriental courts, as may be shown from the position of the Kishlar-Aga at the Turkish court in our day. — *Zochler*. He was chief of the guardians of the harem; but the position gives great influence, and they often become the chief officers of the court. — *Barnes*.

9. Into favor and tender love. With such a purpose before him, — in carrying which out he

into favor¹ and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which *are* of your sort? then shall ye make *me* endanger my head to the king.

11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer

¹ Gen. 39: 21. Prov. 16: 7.

might reckon upon treatment hard for the young to bear, not only from the officers of the palace, but from his own less scrupulous and less pious companions, — the sneers, the shrugs, the taunts, which fall so keenly upon the raw sensitiveness of the youthful spirit, — the thing most essential to smooth his path was the favor and kindness of the chief of the eunuchs. And this he gained immediately. And how? God gave it to him. Not only *favor*, but *tender love*, — such love as that with which a father regards his son. Daniel knew that to please God was the best way to please Ashpenaz; not that Ashpenaz cared about Daniel's pleasing God, but because God, being pleased with his purposes and desires to be true to him, could, if it were needful, incline the heart of Ashpenaz favorably towards him. The "tender love" of Ashpenaz, which the Lord had thus bestowed upon his servant, was a very important acquisition. None could dare to treat harshly, few would venture even to flout at, one who stood so well with that formidable personage. — *Kitto*.

10. The king who hath appointed your meat. It appears that the king's sincere object was to secure in them the very best mental and physical development that could be attained. — *U. Smith*. Dr. Cummings thinks it was an artful plan to make them change their religion, and become thoroughly subservient to Chaldean rule; (1) by changing their names, (2) by tempting them with luxurious living, (3) by compromising them with idolatry through eating food dedicated to idols. *Your faces worse liking*. Properly, "sad, lowering, of a peevish appearance," implying a meagre and decayed appearance. — *Zochler*. Ashpenaz certainly expected that the more luxurious diet would effect their bodies favorably. *Endanger my head*. Be exposed to decapitation or to strangulation. The sense would be "endanger my life," and so *head* is used with us. — *Stuart*. An arbitrary Oriental despot would, in a fit of wrath at his orders having been disobeyed, command the offender to be instantly decapitated. — *J. F. and B.*

11. Melzar. Signifying *butler* or *steward*. The name of the office seems to go over into, and be used as a kind of proper name. It might be rendered *chief butler* or *steward*. The care of the young Hebrews was assigned by Ashpenaz appropriately to the steward. Daniel, &c. On these names see connection.

12. Pulse. Leguminous plants, or their seed; as beans, pease, &c. The word is derived from the same Latin and Greek words (*puls*, *pultis*) as our word *poultice*, made from the meal of pulse — *Webster*. The term probably includes edible seeds in general. Gesenius translates, "vegetables, herbs, opposed to flesh and more delicate food." Probably the term denotes uncooked grains of any kind, whether barley, wheat, mullet, vetches, &c. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. *Ten days*. Sufficiently long to leave traces of the change of food on the young men, yet not too great for a mere experiment. — *Hitzig*. *Water to drink*. Instead of their wine (verse 16). Here is a good lesson on temperance. Young men especially should let wine alone, however pleasant it may taste, or fashionable it may be to drink it; because it is vastly better and safer for body and soul.

13. Children that eat. A number of other boys, besides these four, were undergoing the same training. *As thou seest*. According to the result of thy observations. — *Zochler*.

14. Melzar consented. Perhaps not uninfluenced by the benefit which accrued to himself from this arrangement. They had the good sense to propose, not the comparatively luxurious fare which might be still open to them as Jews, but that which was most simple, inexpensive, and easily prepared. — *Kitto*.

and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

17 ¶ As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

15. Fairer and fatter. The result was triumphant. When Melzar examined them at the end of the ten days, he saw that not only had they lost none of their former comeliness, but that "their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than those of the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." There are reasons in nature why this simple diet should be more favorable to health and beauty than the dainties from which they abstained. Chardin remarks "I have observed that the countenances of the Kechichs are in fact more rosy and smooth than those of others; and that the people who fast much—as the Armenians and the Greeks—are, notwithstanding, very beautiful, sparkling with health, and with a clean and lively countenance." We cannot fail to see, however, that the Lord bestowed his blessing upon their sincere and faithful purpose, and secured their design from failure; for it is not only stated that they were more handsome than the other lads, but that they had become more comely than they themselves had been before.—*Kitto*. By the diet they took they had their minds in some measure more pure, and less burdened, and so fit for learning, and had their bodies in better condition for hard labor. So they readily amassed all the learning of the Hebrews and the Chaldeans.—*Josephus*. This was not the reason why Daniel prospered on pulse and water: it was the blessing of the Lord added to the pulse and water.—*Cummings*.

17. As for these, &c. The probability is that a high court of learning was held, at which the king presided, and the nobles and sages of the land "assisted." The sages probably proposed difficult questions, which the youths readily answered; and were in turn allowed to put questions, which the sages could not answer. In our own examinations of students, the object is chiefly to ascertain *what* they have learned. Oriental examination applied less to this, than to ascertain how far that which had been learned had improved and quickened the capacity, so as to create a certain alertness of judgment and readiness of resource in enabling them to answer off-hand, difficult and puzzling questions, having little direct connection with their studies, but which it was assumed that the general bent of their education ought to have enabled them to solve.—*Kitto*. God gave them. There seems to us something full of overlooked instruction in this. We count it reasonable to look to the Lord for our daily bread,—to apply to him for aid and guidance in the trials and emergencies of life. But how few are they who seek for the same aid from him, and feel the same dependence upon him, in matters of the intellect, in learning, in study, in thought! But why not? When we sit down to read, to write, to study, to think, we should lift up our hearts trustingly to him, and cry,—

"What in me is dark,

Illumine; what is low, raise and support."

—*Kitto*.

All visions and dreams. All possible ones, of every imaginable kind. This was clearly a miraculous gift. This distinguished him above his companions, who must also be regarded as wise and highly cultured. The gift of interpreting the visions and dreams of others is certainly different from seeing them in person.—*Zochler*. They were ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers (verse 21). Nowhere was science or art so visibly exalted as in "the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the wise Chaldeans," who were expected to unravel all the secrets of nature, and who, in point of fact, from those wide level plains "where the entire celestial hemisphere is continually visible to every eye, and where the clear, transparent atmosphere shows night after night the heavens gemmed with countless stars of undimmed brilliancy," had laid the first foundations of astronomy, mingled as it was with the speculations, then deemed as of yet deeper significance, of astrology. Far in advance of the philosophy, as yet unborn, of Greece in advance even of the ancient philosophy of Egypt, the Chaldeans long represented to both these nations the highest flights of human intellect, even as the majestic temples, which served to them at once as college and observatory, towered above the buildings of the then known world.—*Stanley*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. In the first of the apocryphal books of Esdras, there is a curious story about a contest of theses between three Hebrew youths, in the palace of Darius, king of Persia.

II. Water, or wine. It is well known that merchants are rated in certain books for the use of traders, according to capital, business ability, promptness, and the like; and one who searches the books may find even still more about them. A number of years ago a firm of four men in Boston were rated as A 1, rich, prosperous, young, prompt. One of them had a curiosity to see how they were rated, and found all those points on the book, and was satisfied; but at the end it was written, "*But they all drink.*" He thought it a good joke at the time; but to-day two are dead, another a drunkard, the fourth poor and living in part on charity. They would far better have "dared to be Daniel."

III. It is curious to find thus early a practice, which, until within these few years, might still be seen in active and well-organized operation at the Ottoman Porte. The parallel is indeed so exact, that there is not a single point which might not receive illustration from that source. The time is still within living memory, when the pages of the seraglio, the officers of the court, as well as the greater part of the high functionaries of state and governors of provinces, were originally boys of Christian parentage, who had been taken captive in war, or bought or stolen in time of peace. The finest and most capable of these were sent to the palace, and placed under the charge of the chief of the white eunuchs. These lads were brought up in the religion of their masters; and in a school within the palace they received such complete instruction in Turkish learning and science as it was the lot of few others to obtain. Much pains were taken to teach them the Turkish language (to them a foreign one) with the greatest purity, as spoken at court. They were clad neatly, and well but temperately dieted. They slept in large dormitories, where there were long rows of beds. Each had a separate couch; and between every third and fourth bed lay a white eunuch, who kept a watchful eye upon the conduct of the lads near him, and reported his observations to his chief. When they had reached a proper age, the lads were instructed in military exercises; and it was an aim to render them active, brave, and laborious. Every one was also, according to the custom of the country, taught some handicraft employment, to serve him as a resource in any time of need. Their education being completed, those who had shown most capacity were employed about the person of the sovereign, and the rest were assigned to the various offices of the extensive establishment to which they belonged. In due time these able or successful youths got advanced to high court offices, which gave them immediate access to the royal person. It has not rarely happened, that favored court officers have at once stepped into the highest offices of the state. Now, if the reader examines the chapter before him, he will perceive how much this agrees with the usage of the ancient Babylonian court. — *Kitto*.

PRACTICAL.

1. Not defile (verse 8). Let us ever remember that to be singular for the mere sake of singularity is absurd; but to be singular when the call of duty and faithfulness to God demands it is the evidence of a true Christian. — C.

2. Refuse to defile yourself with any sinful pleasure or custom, however pleasant or popular. The first thought you have to think of, the first duty you have to discharge, is the duty that you owe to the soul. — C.

3. If you cannot be faithful in the least, you cannot be faithful in much. I believe it to be a very important thought, that there are no little things in morals, though there may be little things in matter. Thus we learn that events which seem to us frivolous and unimportant may become the Thermopylae of a Christian's conflict, the Marathon of a nation's being, the turning-point of everlasting life or everlasting death. — C.

4. There is often as much real religion to be shown in little things as in great things. You have in Daniel all the feeling and the religious principle that a martyr would require for a martyr's triumphs; but it is exhibited in a circumstance the most minute and apparently unimportant. — C.

5. Are there any here who would risk the condemnation of their God, rather than incur the sneer of man or lose the king's meat? If such there be, Daniel even now rises from his grave, and will rise at the resurrection morn, and bear witness against them, for seeking their temporal advantage, — though in so doing I shall show that they have missed it, — and forgetting and neglecting their eternal and inexhaustible obligations to God. — C.

6. Some would say, he need not have been so very strict in Babylon as he was in Jerusalem; that in Rome men should do as Rome does, and in London men should do as London does. How can any one seriously say so? Duty, is, like its God, the same everywhere. — C.

7. Do not be rash in saying, I cannot live as a Christian here, and therefore I will abandon it. That is very often an excuse for self-indulgence. It is very often an excuse for not determining to be firm and faithful. It is supposing that you can do your duty best on the soft lawn, and not on the hard and tented battle-field. — C.

8. Make the world bow to your religion; never let your religion bow to the world. — C.

9. What gentleness and courtesy, as well as what a sanctified heart! The highest Christianity is always associated with the highest courtesy. My conviction is, that none but a finished Christian can be a finished gentleman. — C.

10. In short, Daniel found, what every true Christian has found, that Christian principle is the highest expediency. — C.

11. God honored his servants. The result of this faithfulness to God was promotion in the palace, and the favor of the king. The lesson, therefore, that I draw from the whole subject is in these words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things will be added unto you." In other words, make religion the great thing, and all the rest that you want will fall into its place. — C.

12. Not dainty food, but the blessing of God, develops beauty and strength. — *Lange*.

13. The value of temperance. Dare to be a Daniel.

14. Well might South reply to the flippant objection that God has no need of our learning, "Much less has he need of your ignorance." — *Cowles*.

LESSON VII.—MAY 19, 1878.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM.—DAN. 2: 36-45.

TIME. B. C. 603; in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's sole reign (Dan. 2: 1). Nebuchadnezzar reigned with his father one year, the first of Daniel's training; so that this dream occurred at the end of Daniel's three years.

PLACE. Babylon.

RULERS. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; Jehoiakim, king of Judah.

PROPHETS. Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.

THE CONNECTION.

Daniel had just passed his examinations at the end of his three years' training, and become one of the wise men, when one night the great king, Nebuchadnezzar, had a dream. He awoke in a state of alarm and dismay; but he vainly strove to recover the circumstances which had left upon his mind an impression so deep. To us there would be no resource in such a case; but the king of Babylon had one, which, as he judged, ought in such a case to be effectual. His court was crowded with men of learning and science, which science embraced the pretension to a curious variety of occult knowledge, by which the adepts claimed to be able to uncover the secret things that were hidden from eyes less learned. No ancient people were so much devoted as the Babylonians to the sciences; and in this the testimony of history entirely agrees with that of the sacred books. In the ancient East, and indeed in the modern East, what was really known of science was always connected with some kind of charlatanry or other; that is to say, the learned were not content with the credit of what they did know, but connected with it the pretension to some occult and peculiar knowledge beyond. The king sent for them, and required them to tell his dream, and then to interpret it to him. At this they were confounded; and they informed the king that they were quite ready to interpret any dream related to them, but to tell a dream which the dreamer had himself forgotten, passed their power. The tyrant was wroth at this, and declared, that, if they did not, they should be cut in pieces, and their houses made a dunghill. On hearing this, the unhappy enchanters declared with some heat, that there was no man upon the earth who could meet this requirement, nor was there ever any king who taxed to this extent the skill of his diviners. He remarked astutely, that, if they told him the dream, he should then have proof that they were able to furnish the interpretation. Now, there is much good sense in this. Nebuchadnezzar justly considered their telling him the dream itself was such a test of their competency to furnish the interpretation afterwards, as it was not unreasonable, on their own principles, to require of them; because the same divine power which could communicate to them the interpretation, as they professed, could also communicate to them the dream itself. The diviners, however, could only, in their despair, exclaim that none could declare what the king required, "except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." Daniel, although not present, was of the same opinion. He, after his examination, had been advanced into the order of learned men; and when the king decreed a general slaughter of that order, as he did in his wrath, the four Hebrew youths were about to share

that doom, when Daniel, confident that the Lord he served could impart this secret to him, implored a respite in the execution of this sentence. This was granted. Then they gave themselves unto prayer; and God heard them, and revealed the whole matter to Daniel in a night-vision. Indeed, as it was clearly meant by Him who gave the king his dream, that it should be interpreted to him, it can not be questioned that the honor of the interpretation was reserved for Daniel, in order that he might be advanced to such a position as would enable him to protect and aid his exiled brethren, and that respect might be secured for the God they served. — *Kittó*.

36 ¶ This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof Before the king.

37 Thou, O king, art a king¹ of

kings: for² the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

¹ Ezra 7: 12. Isa. 47: 5. Ezek. 26: 7. Hos. 8: 10. ² Ezra 1: 2.

EXPLANATORY.

36. This is the dream recorded in verses 31-37. The interpretation. There can be no mistake as to the interpretation of this vision, because God himself has interpreted it for us. In seeking for the fulfilment of this prophecy in history, we must ever look also at the parallel visions of Daniel, in chs. 7, 8, and 11, where the same prophecies are given under other symbols; and the parallel verses will be referred to as the vision is unfolded. In regard to the first three kingdoms, and the fifth, there is almost universal agreement. With regard to the fourth kingdom, there are two entirely different historical applications, both of which will be given. There are very strong authorities on each side. Either may be true. More likely still, BOTH ARE TRUE. They may be like several prophecies in Isaiah, which have a double fulfilment, a nearer, and a more remote, each filling the vision of the seer, as a small object near the eye will span the same visual angle as a large object in the distance. The interpretation shows that the central idea of the dream is the course of empire; the rapid succession of great world-monarchies. Of these, the first four are of the earth, earthly; mere human kingdoms. The fifth is in some respects peculiar, being "set up by the God of heaven." The first is the Chaldean empire; the second, the Medo-Persian; the third, the Grecian (Macedonian), under Alexander; the fourth, "the empire of Alexander's successors;" the fifth, the gospel kingdom of the New Testament. — *Cowles*. This great image is meant to be a standing symbol, representative, as Daniel explains it, of four successions of supreme and sovereign kingdoms, beginning in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. History shows that there have been just four universal kingdoms in the world, and only four. — *Cummings*. (1.) The golden head: the Assyrio-Babylonian monarchy. (2.) The silver breast and arms: the Medo-Persian empire. (3.) The brazen belly and thighs: the Greco-Macedonian kingdoms, especially, after Alexander, those of Egypt and Syria. (4.) The legs of iron: the power of Rome, bestriding the East and West, but broken up into a number of states, the ten toes, which retained some of its warlike strength (the iron), mingled with elements of weakness (the soft potters' clay), which rendered the whole imperial structure unstable. (5.) The stone cut without hands, out of the Living Rock, dashing down the image, becoming a mountain, and filling all the earth: the spiritual kingdom of Christ. — *William Smith*.

37. Thou — art a king of kings. Almost all the ancient Eastern histories are lost; but there are some fragments even of heathen historians yet preserved, which speak of this mighty conqueror and his extended empire, and describe him as holding in subjection Egypt, Syria, Phœnicia, and Arabia, as having subdued the greatest parts of Libya and Spain, and his having proceeded as far as the Pillars of Hercules, and led his army out of Spain into Thrace and Pontus. — *Dr. Newton*. God hath given thee. And here observe that Daniel never attempts to make his life more pleasant by suppressing the fact that he abhorred idolatry, and that the God he served was the only real and true God. So, throughout, he ascribes every thing to this God whom he served. — *Kittó*. Power — and glory. Modern research has shown that Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest monarch that Babylon, or perhaps the East generally, ever produced. He must have possessed an enormous command of human labor. Nine-tenths of Babylon, and nineteen-twentieths of all the other ruins that in almost countless profusion cover the land, are composed of brick stamped with his name. His wealth and the magnificence of his court seem to have been on a par with the number and size of his buildings. — *Rawlinson*. Of all the seats of empire, of all the cities that the pride or power of man has built on the surface of the globe, Babylon was the greatest. Its greatness, as it was originated, so in large measure was secured, by its natural position. Its founders took advantage of the huge spur of tertiary rock which projects itself from the long inclined plane of the Syrian desert into the alluvial basin of Mesopotamia, thus furnishing a dry and solid

38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given¹ into thine hand, and hath

made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.

39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior² to thee.

¹ Jer. 27: 6. ² ch. 5: 28.

platform on which a flourishing city might rest, whilst it was defended on the south by the vast morass or lake, if not estuary, extending in that remote period from the Persian Gulf. On this vantage-ground it stood, exactly crossing the line of traffic between the Mediterranean coasts and the Iranian mountains; just also on that point where the Euphrates, sinking into a deeper bed, changes from a vast expanse into a manageable river, not wider than the Thames of our own metropolis; where, also, out of the deep, rich, alluvial clay, it was easy to dig the bricks which from its earliest date supplied the material for its immense buildings, cemented by the bitumen which from that same early date came floating down the river from the springs in its upper course. Far as the horizon itself, extended the circuit of the vast capital of the then known world. If the imperceptible circumference of our modern capitals has exceeded the limits of Babylon, yet none in ancient times or modern can be compared with its definite enclosure, which was on the lowest computation 40, on the highest 60 miles round. Like Nineveh or Ecbatana, it was, but on a still larger scale, a country or empire enclosed in a city. Forests, parks, gardens, were intermingled with the houses so as to present rather the appearance of the suburbs of a great metropolis than the metropolis itself. Yet still the regularity and order of a city were preserved. The streets, according to a fashion rare in Europe, whether ancient or modern, but common in ancient Asia, were straight, and at right angles to each other. The houses, unlike those of most ancient cities, except at Tyre, and afterwards in Rome, were three or four stories high. But the prodigious scale of the place appeared chiefly in the enormous size, unparalleled before or since, of its public buildings, and rendered more conspicuous by the flatness of the country from which they rose. Even in their decay, "their colossal piles, domineering over the monotonous plain, produce an effect of grandeur and magnificence which cannot be imagined in any other situation." — *Stanley*.

38. Wheresoever men dwell. Not over the whole earth, but perhaps over the whole civilized world of Asia, over all the historical nations of his time. — *Keil*. Beasts — and the fowls. Meaning to enforce the idea that he reigned over the known world and all that was upon it. Thou art this head of gold. He is placed at the head, because the symbolic vision begins with him. — *Stuart*. The head is the smallest organ, but the highest and most important. Of gold, on account of its great riches. Babylon was by Isaiah (14: 4) called the golden city. — *Lange*. In ch. 7: 4, under the symbol of the four beasts, this kingdom is described as a lion with eagle's wings. Layard's late work entitled "Discoveries in Nineveh" abounds with cases of this mongrel type, putting an eagle's wings upon a lion, or, as the case may be, upon a bull. "Winged Lions" have been disinterred in considerable numbers from the ruins of Nineveh within the present century, affording remarkable proof of these conceptions in this vision of Daniel. Moreover, the lion and the eagle were then, as now, symbols of royalty, figuring conspicuously in the memorial arms of sovereigns. The reader will recall "the British lion" and "the American eagle." — *Cowles*.

39. Another kingdom. This kingdom lasted about 65 years after this. All agree that this is the *Medo-Persian*, the next universal kingdom. It succeeded Babylon, B.C. 538, and lasted about 200 years. Next in time after the Babylonian kingdom. — *Stuart*. Inferior to thee. More worthless and degraded, but increasing in size and extent. Inferior to Babylon, just as the silver is inferior to the gold; of greater territorial dimensions, but of less national splendor and magnificence. The twofold character that is here indicated — for every symbol in the Bible has its counterpart in history and in fact — viz., its having the breast and the two arms stretching out from it of silver, instantly suggests the historic fact that Cyrus was the monarch, that Media was one arm, and Persia the other; these being two component parts of the kingdom of Cyrus, he being the tie that knit the two realms into one. Persia was the one realm, and Media the other, the latter absorbed by the former; and both, like two arms, joined together in Cyrus, who inspired them with their vigor, wielded their energies with success, and established their empire from the rising of the sun to the going-down thereof. You have, then, in Media and Persia, or, as it is called in history, the *Medo-Persian* universal sovereignty, the fulfilment, years after Daniel wrote, of the symbol shown to Nebuchadnezzar. — *Cummings*. In the vision of the beasts, this second kingdom is described as a bear (ch. 7: 5), symbolizing the austere life of the Persians in their mountains, also their cruelty. "A bear is an all-devouring animal." — *J. F. and B.* Its "standing on one side" should mean either on one side of the lion-power of verse 4, viz., on the north, or, more closely, north-

and another third kingdom of brass, which¹ shall bear rule over all the earth.

40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it

of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

¹ ch. 7: 7, 23.

north-east; or that it put forth its aggressions in one direction, i.e., toward Chaldaea and the tribes of Western Asia. Either sense is admissible in view both of the original language and of the historic facts. I doubt if any special significance attaches to the number of these ribs. The beast is commissioned to devour yet more. Of course this denotes the subjugation of yet other nationalities, and absorbing them into its own, — an accurate history so far of the Medo-Persian power. — *Cowles*. A third kingdom of brass. The belly and thighs of brass (verse 32). This must necessarily designate the Macedonian world kingdom of Alexander, whose grand and rapid introduction as if borne on the wings of the tempest is represented in the parallel vision of ch. 7, verse 6, by the figure of a leopard with four wings. Its ethical (moral and religious) inferiority to both its predecessors is indicated by the brass; while the relative clause "bear rule over all the earth," and the increasing size of the parts of the image, seemed to imply that the extent of its power should even exceed theirs. — *Lange*. If any special significance attaches to the four heads of the leopard (ch. 7: 6), it may be this: that the Grecian empire of Alexander was distinguished (as was Greece herself) more by the power of *thought* than the power of brute force. Among the great kingdoms of that ancient world, this was the empire of brains. — *Cowles*. The Macedonian empire existed about B.C. 334-142.

40-43. The fourth kingdom, iron. At this point arise two distinct interpretations, which quite evenly divide commentators. For a fuller discussion and argument on the Roman side, see Cummings's Lectures on Daniel, Barnes's Notes on Daniel, Bishop Newton, and most English commentators; and, on the side of "the kingdom of Alexander's successors," Lange's, Cowles's, and Stuart's and Cook's commentaries on Daniel, and most German commentaries.

The fourth kingdom is I. Rome. History shows that there have been four universal empires, and only four. This empire can be proved from history to be none other than the great Roman empire itself. From the period when Alexander swept the world and made it the measure of his kingdom, to the period when Rome gained the ascendancy and became the universal empire, we read of no other universal, supreme, and absorbing sovereignty. Gibbon thus speaks of the extent of the Roman dominions: "The empire was about 2,000 miles in breadth, from the wall of Antoninus and northern limits of Dacia to the Atlas and the Tropic of Cancer. It extended in length more than 3,000 miles, from the western ocean to the Euphrates. The arms of the republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid strides to the Euphrates, and the Danube, and the Rhine, and the ocean; and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations or kings, were successively broken by the iron monarchy of Rome." No wonder, it is said that this last kingdom, which we have shown, I think irresistibly, to be the Roman empire, was to be split into ten divisions; or, if the wild beast from the abyss, seen by John in Patmos, be taken, it was to have ten horns; or, if Daniel's subsequent visions be had recourse to, it was to be tenfold. We have the fact clearly predicted, that it was to be split or divided into ten kingdoms. Here is a broad prediction, of which palpable facts can alone be regarded as the fulfilment. Is it, then, matter of historic fact, as it is matter of prophetic declaration, that this Roman empire has been divided into ten kingdoms at its fall or decline? That this has been so, every historian will tell you. Gibbon speaks of the ten kingdoms: Müller, the German historian, alludes to the ten kingdoms of the Roman empire; and I might quote from historians innumerable, all speaking of this tenfold division, not as a prophetic announcement, but as an his-

44 And in the days of these kings | kingdom, which shall never be
shall the God¹ of heaven set up a | destroyed: and the kingdom shall

¹ Micah 4: 7. Luke 1: 32, 33.

torical and actual fact. I ask you to notice this startling fact. You will find that in each century these ten kingdoms have always turned out of each revolution; and every attempt to make them fewer, or to make them one, has signally and historically failed. — *Cummings*. Iron and clay. Not an actual rupture, but such a diversity in the internal constitution, that, while there would be the element of great power, there would be also an element of weakness, never to be blended so as to become one harmonious whole. The reference is to some foreign admixture; nations of other languages, laws, and customs, which were never truly amalgamated with the original materials. In the other three kingdoms there was comparative homogeneity: in Rome there was an intermingling of all nations and tongues, which ultimately contributed to its fall. — *Barnes*. Mingle with the seed of men. They made marriages and alliances one with another, but no union ensued. Some expound it by the secular and ecclesiastical powers sometimes agreeing, and sometimes clashing. — *B. J. Newton*. The little horn (ch. 8: 9-11) on this theory is the Pope of Rome.

The fourth kingdom. II. "The empire of Alexander's successors," or the Greco-Syrian. It is the broken, divided empire that in fact next succeeded Alexander, known in history as the "empire of Alexander's successors." The portions with which the Jews came specially in contact were the Syrian kingdom founded by Seleucus Nicator, and the Egyptian founded by Ptolemy Lagus. In point of time, these powers fill the two or three centuries that immediately followed the death of Alexander, B.C. 323. Yet again, as to general character; this fourth kingdom, according to the symbol and its interpretation, is mixed, composite, brittle, inadhæive, not unified and consolidated into one firm power. These are strong points of its character. In all these points the description fits the fragmentary empire that immediately follows Alexander. Here was strength and weakness blended, — a fact which harmonizes with the brittle character of the kingdoms of Alexander's successors. Ten consecutive kings fall between the death of Alexander, and the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, who came most into contact with the Jews, and who most fully represented the relationship of the Jewish nation to foreign powers; but there is no occasion to throw ourselves upon conjecture at all. In this prophecy (ch. 11), which bears from beginning to end the appearance of being explanatory of the visions in chs. 7 and 8, these ten kings lie in their order, filling precisely the interval between the death of Alexander and the rise of the little horn, Antiochus Epiphanes. How, then, can we doubt that these are the ten kings (horns) of this fourth beast? They come to us named and defined on the highest possible authority, — that of the revealing Spirit himself. Let us accept them, and so end the long controversy, and invite to harmony and peace the immensely diversified opinions of those who have sought to find these ten horns. When I come to treat of ch. 11, it will be more in place to give the history of these kings with some detail. Suffice it here to say that five of them are kings of the south, in the Greco-Egyptian dynasty: viz., Ptolemy Lagus in verse 5; Ptolemy Philadelphus in verse 6; Ptolemy Euergetes in verses 7-9; Ptolemy Philopater in verses 11, 12; and Ptolemy Philometer in verses 25-27. Five of them are kings of the north, in the Greek-Syrian dynasty: viz., Seleucus Nicator in verse 5; Antiochus Theos in verse 6; Seleucus Callinicus in verses 7, 8; Antiochus the Great, verses 10-19; and Seleucus Philopator in verse 20. This brings us in the line of ch. 11, to Antiochus Epiphanes the little-horn king, making a perfect correspondence in respect to all the vital points of the case between this vision of ch. 7 and that of ch. 11. — *Cowles*. The Syrian monarchy was of a mongrel character, the native Oriental element corresponding to the clay, and the foreign Greek to the iron. They were combined in all sorts of affinities. The ten toes may symbolize the numerous satrapies which fell to the share of Seleucus. This dynasty is denominated fierce from contrast with the lenient governments preceding, and especially from its intolerance towards the Jewish religion. — *Lange*.

44. God set up a kingdom. The kingdom of Christ; the fifth universal kingdom. In the days of these kings. Some time during the existence of these four great kingdoms. Let it be borne in mind, that, of these five kingdoms, four are in point of origin earthly, the fifth heavenly; four are of this world, the fifth is "not of this world:" four are of the sort well known to profane history; the fifth is of the sort little known except in sacred history, — a kingdom whose defined purpose is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Though eminently spiritual, it yet none the less controls the external life unto universal righteousness. — *Cowles*. Never be destroyed. A sure promise of the final triumph of Christianity, no matter how many or how great its enemies.

not be left to other people, *but* it shall break¹ in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake

in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

¹ Ps. 2: 8.

Not left to other people. The dominion shall never pass away from its rightful possessor. The government shall never change hands. — *Barnes*. **Break in pieces.** As by the stone (verses 34, 35). This describes the existence of a power in subduing nations. It does not so much refer to violence, as to the bringing them entirely under this new kingdom. The force may not be *physical* force. The kingdom of the Redeemer is a kingdom of *principles*, and these principles shall prevail over all nations. It does not necessarily mean that this shall be done at once. The same ground was substantially occupied by all the four kingdoms, though there were *accessions* to each; and a demolition of the last would be in fact the demolition of the whole image. — *Barnes*.

45. Out of the mountain. From its native bed, wherever that might be. From the great universal principles of the universe: it was a part of the divine nature and therefore indestructible. **Without hands.** That it is "cut from the mountain without hands," indicates that the Messiah was born and brought forth before the world as king of nations by divine rather than human agencies; while his smiting the great image to its destruction denotes the power of God in his providential government, overturning guilty nations. — *Cowles*. The stone became a great mountain (verse 35). A prophecy that this kingdom of Christ should grow to fill the whole earth. With feeble beginnings, scarcely noticed at the beginning by the nations, it has grown to be the mightiest power to-day on the face of the earth. And, from the fulfillment of the former parts of this prophecy, we know that this too shall come to pass, and

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run.

Profoundly impressed with the greatness of Daniel and of Daniel's God, and quite too oblivious of Daniel's personal disclaimer ("not for any wisdom that I have more than any living"), the king fell prostrate before him, and gave command that an oblation and sweet odors should be offered to him. This must be ascribed to his heathen ideas. Still it did not preclude from his mind a strong conviction of the supremacy of the God of Daniel. His profession of faith on this point is, for the time, very strong. Promotion followed, and Daniel is advanced to the position of prime minister for the province of Babylon, and head-man over the whole fraternity of magicians, soothsayers, priests of religion, and of science. At his request his three friends also are promoted to important trusts. Daniel's place in the gate of the king put him next the royal person as his first counsellor, — a position of the very highest trust and influence. Such were the first and immediate results of the divine favor to Daniel in revealing the secret of the king's dream. — *Cowles*.

PRACTICAL.

1. (On the connection,) No greatness or prosperity can secure so much as an undisturbed night's sleep. — *Scott*.

2. Men are generally more eager to gratify curiosity, or to dive into futurity, than to learn the way of salvation or the path of duty. — *Scott*.

3. The downward and deteriorating tendency of all society, and nations, and corporations of all sort, if they are without religion. They begin with gold; they go on to silver; they deteriorate into brass; and lastly they end in iron. — *Cummings*.

4. True religion is the sweetener and the strengthener of society. It is by religion that a nation stands; and in the absence of it a hundred thousand bayonets are not stronger than a hundred thousand straws. — *C*.

5. All the movements of society are the executors of the purposes of God; and it becomes the Christian to study what is going on around him, as well as what is written in the Bible. — *C*.

6. There are no accidents on earth: all history is thus constantly fulfilling all prophecy. — *C*.

7. All around is changing; but the word of God lives and abides forever. Thrones and dynasties and kings are passing away, but God's word remains. — *C*.

8. God is in the world. The world is not an orb abandoned by the Deity. Our creed is not "God was," but "God is." — *C*.

9. Seeing, then, that the gold, and the silver, and the brass, and the iron, and clay, — all these things, — must be dissolved, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being of fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" — C.

10. That kingdom is at our doors; that bright epoch comes speedily. Are you interested in it? Have you a share in it? Are you subjects of it? Are you born again? My dear friends, what an awful thing if that kingdom should come in all its glory, and we should find ourselves excluded! — C.

11. Remember the great results that come from small beginnings: the little stone becomes the mountain, and fills the earth.

12. The greatest powers are like this stone, cut out without hands. Their origin is unseen; their power is spiritual; but, like the still small voice which was greater than earthquake or storm or fire, these divine powers shall sway the world.

13. Let us never be discouraged. No matter what wealth or power is against us: our kingdom of Christ is sure to triumph in the end. As the first part of this prophecy has been fulfilled, so will the end be.

14. Let us learn faith by the fulfilment of this prophecy. None but God could have foretold the history of future events, or written out so exactly the history of these kingdoms. As none but God could have written the first chapter of Genesis, and revealed the truth which modern science is finding exactly true, word for word, in the rocks, these *must* be the word of God.

LESSON VIII.—MAY 26, 1878.

THE FIERY FURNACE.—DAN. 3: 21-27.

TIME. About B. C. 587; in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, according to the Greek and Arabic translations; about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the kingdom of Judah (Lesson V.).

PLACE. Babylon; the plain of Dura, not far from the city of Babylon.

RULERS. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; the "seven wise men" flourish in Greece.

PROPHETS. Daniel and Ezekiel in Babylon; Jeremiah in Jerusalem.

THE CONNECTION.

King Nebuchadnezzar was what would be called a man of large ideas and vast undertakings. The great empire he had won and consolidated comprised many different nations, with different gods and different forms of religious service. Seeing that all these nations obeyed him as a king, and were subject to his absolute sway, it seemed to him but reasonable that his god should share his triumph, and that, as there was but one civil, so there should be but one religious, obedience. He therefore determined to set up a vast golden image of his god in the plain of Dura, and that, at a signal given by bands of music, all the persons assembled together in the vast plain at the time of dedication should fall down and worship this image. At the court of Babylon there were necessarily numbers of persons belonging to all nations subject to the king's sceptre; but, that the act might be complete, the governors of the different provinces of the empire were summoned to assist at the ceremony, to represent the nations and provinces, the governments of which they administered. The image was of gold, — hardly of solid gold, but hollow, or of wood covered with gold. The great size renders this supposition necessary, besides that it was never the ancient custom to make any but small figures of solid gold. The image was no less than 60 cubits high, and six cubits broad, — dimensions which must have rendered it visible to the most remote of the worshippers assembled in the great plain at the dedication. This vast size is not without parallel, and has even been exceeded. The Colossus of Rhodes was 70 cubits high; and the Colossus of Nero was not of inferior magnitude, being 110 feet high. These, however, were not of gold. It is observable that the height is out of all proportion to the breadth; and, as the rules of proportion were usually observed in such cases, it is probable that the assigned height included that of the pedestal on which the image stood. A statue six cubits broad could not well be more than 36 cubits high, if the ordinary rules of proportion in the human figure were followed. It is worthy of note that this is not the only instance we possess of gigantic idols of gold among the Babylonians. Herodotus writes that in his time there was at Babylon an idol image of gold 12 cubits high; and, what is still more remarkable, another authority, obviously

speaking of the same statue, mentions that every stranger was obliged to worship it before he was allowed to enter the city. The penalty upon those who failed to fall down and worship the image the king had set up was that they should be cast into a "burning fiery furnace." By this it would appear that death by burning alive was a very ancient punishment for "heresy."—*Kitto*.

The image. 90 feet high including the pedestal, and nine feet broad. It was in the form of a man. Some regard it as an image of the Babylonian god Bel, or Belus, "essentially identical with Baal."—*Smith's Bible Dictionary*. **The place, the plain of Dura.** In the neighborhood of Babylon, there are at present to be found in the S.S.E. of the ruins representing the former capital, a row of mounds which bear the name of Dura; and at the end of them there is a smaller one which forms a square six metres (19½ feet) high, with a basis of 14 metres (46 feet), wholly built of unburnt brick, which shows so surprising a resemblance to a colossal statue and its pedestal, that Offort believes this little mound to be the remains of the golden image erected by Nebuchadnezzar.—*Keil*. **The time.** About 16 years after the interpretation of his dream by Daniel, when the impression then made was almost obliterated. **The assembled company.** The king could not convene all the people of his vast dominions. The next thing to it was to convene all the officers of every name and grade. These would be the strong and influential men of his realm. Hence this convocation would send its influence for idolatry down through the whole political framework of his kingdom, and reach its entire population. The great number of grades of officers indicates a high degree of system and order in the constitution of this government. Of the eight several officers grouped in his summons, the first is the highest grade, a sort of viceroy. The second is the class of deputies. The third is commonly rendered "governor," and is used repeatedly by Ezra, Nehemiah, and others; indeed, it is identically the pacha. The fourth class are the chief judges; the fifth, the royal treasurers; the sixth were persons skilled in the law, and might be either counsellors or judges; the seventh term seems to be essentially the same as the sixth, lawyers; and the last comprehends all other officers in the province. All these were summoned to come to the dedication of the great image.—*Cowles*. **The musical instruments** (verse 15): 1. **Coronet** was a horn, whether straight or curved. 2. **The flute.** The reed-flute, or Pan's pipe, which consists of several reeds of different thickness and length bound together, and played at the end.—*Lange*. 3. **Harp.** A cithara. It resembled the later harp of the Assyrians, but with fewer strings. It was carried under the arms, and played with both hands, one on either side of the strings.—*Rawlinson*. 4. **Sackbut.** The "sackbut" is thought to have been a trombone,—an instrument which secures a wide range of tone by being constructed with a slide by which its length and volume may be changed at pleasure.—*Cowles*. 5. **Psalttery** was an instrument like a harp. It was distinguished from the cithara (No. 3) in this particular, that, while the strings of the cithara passed over the sounding-board, those of the psalttery were placed under it.—*Keil*. 6. **Dulcimer.** A sort of bagpipe, an instrument consisting of two pipes, which are passed through a leathern bag, from which their ends protrude equally above and below, the lower of the pipes being played with the fingers like a flute.—*Lange*.

21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and

were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

EXPLANATORY.

21. These men. Named in verse 22, and ch. 1: 6, 7. As no mention is made of Daniel, he may have been off in a distant part of the kingdom. **Coats, &c.** The writer states carefully that the men were bound with all their usual clothing on. The special reason for noting this with care was to show that the fire was restrained from harming not their persons only, but their clothes also. The precise sense of the words rendered, "their coats, their hosen, and their hats," is of relatively small consequence to us: yet it may be worth the space required to say briefly, that in the original the first word means (probably) their mantles, the usual outer garment; the second, either the tunic, the usual undergarment coming down to the knees, or, as some suppose, wide and loose trousers. The latter was the view of our English translators in the word "hosen," which at that time was used to denote trousers and not stockings. The last word seems to mean a garment girded on about the person, and not a "hat."—*Cowles*. **Burning fiery furnace.** The editor of Calmet (Taylor) supposes that the furnace here referred to was rather a fire kindled in the open court of the temple, like a place set apart for burning martyrs, than a closed furnace of brick.—*Barnes*. A smelting furnace in the form of a pit, arranged (verses 22, 23) so that at least one of its sides rose above the earth. The principal opening by which materials for burning or smelting were introduced was above; a second for the removal of slag, cinders, &c., or the molten metal, was below in one of the sides.—*Zochler*.

22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those¹ men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his

counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking² in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son³ of God.

26 ¶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego,

¹ ch. 6: 24. ² Isa. 43: 2. ³ Prov. 30: 4. Luke 1: 35. Rom. 1: 4.

22. Command urgent, &c. The furnace was so hot as to send out the flames so far as to render approach dangerous. But the urgency of the king would not admit of any arrangements by which the approach could be made safe. — *Barnes*. The flame slew those men. It was necessary to approach to the very mouth of the furnace in order to cast them in; and it is very conceivable that a heated furnace would belch forth such flames that this could not be done but at the peril of life. — *Barnes*. This circumstance is mentioned to show the greatness of the miracle by which the three were preserved unhurt in the midst of the furnace. — *Kell*.

23. These three — into the fiery furnace. The king of Babylon had never met such heroic men before. His will had perhaps never been so squarely resisted. Hence his wrath is wrought up intensely. His order to heat the furnace sevenfold above its usual point only evinced his own heated and almost maddening passion; for no man in his cool reason would think the killing any more sure with sevenfold heat than with the usual amount. Such wrath of man, however, is very sure to work out God's praise, as it did here. The miracle of protection was the more signal; the rebuke to the king was the more pungent and the more widely known; and the re-action from the death of the executioners served still to heighten the good moral impression. — *Cowles*. In several versions there follow here 68 verses, containing "the song of the three holy children." It may be found in the Apocrypha. It plainly does not belong to the inspired Bible.

24. The king was astonished (astonished). Then, when the king heard the result, he became greatly excited with new and strange emotions, far unlike those of his previous passion. The thought flashes upon him, that he has come into conflict here with a new and unknown Power. He has cast three men into his furnace of fire sevenfold heated; and lo, the fire does not touch them! And — more fearful, if possible, than even this — there is a fourth personage there, and the glory of his form strikes him as that of a Son of God. It is altogether unearthly. — *Cowles*.

25. Have no hurt. The flame recognized the presence of Him that made it, and bowed reverently before the Son of God, just as on other occasions the waters of the sea owned him, the winds heard him, and all nature responded to him, and obeyed him. The flame lost its power to consume, because it was commanded not to do so by Him that kindled it at the first. Nature is all pliant in the hand of Jesus. He is the Lord of creation; he has but to speak, and all things will respond in ten thousand echoes, "Speak, Lord: thy servants hear." These Hebrew youths, we are told by the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "quenched the violence of fire" by their faith. — *Cummings*. Son of God. The word "Son" in the phrase "Son of God" is without the article. The expression therefore does not imply any knowledge of the Son of God in the New Testament sense, but only indicates that he thought this personage divine. — *Cowles*. The king was convinced, alarmed, remorseful. He went as near as he durst to the mouth of the furnace, and desired the young men to come forth. They came; and the nobles who crowded around had ample opportunity of witnessing that the fire had no power over the faithful servants of Jehovah. Not only were they entirely unhurt, and their clothes unscathed, but even "the smell of fire had not passed upon them." — *Kitto*.

26. Near to the mouth. The opening in the furnace, the door. Most high God. The king knows now that the great God is with those men, and that they are his servants. So he accosts them: "Ye servants of the most High God, come forth and come hither." He does not question their power, though bound, to come forth at their own option. The miracle was wrought in the

ye¹ servants of the most high² God, come forth, and come *hither*. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's coun-

sellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had³ no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

¹ Gal. 1: 10. ² Gen. 14: 18. ³ Isa. 43: 2. Heb. 11: 34.

most public manner. The king's high officers were called together. They could see the sevenfold-heated furnace. They knew those three men were cast in there, bound; they saw them come out unharmed, — not a hair singed, not even the smell of fire on their clothing. Verily, this was the finger of God, and they all were witnesses. — *Cowles*.

27. Princes, &c. See notes at beginning of this lesson. **Fire had no power.** The expressions rise in beautiful order. The fire not only had no prevailing power over their *bodies*, but neither was a *hair* of their head burnt, nor their flowing *robes* singed, nor even the *smell* of fire had passed on them. Compare Isa. 44: 2. — *Wintle*. It is worthy of notice, that the king began now to appreciate the consistency and moral heroism of these men who so firmly refused to worship any other God than their own. The very qualities which so stirred his wrath before, command his profoundest admiration now. He really finds that the God of these Hebrew youth is able to protect them in the midst of the hottest furnace, and hence he concludes that the exclusive worship of such a God will pay. The things he specially notes as done by them are — that they "trusted in their God" (he had never seen such trust before!), that they "*changed*" in the sense of disregarding and finally reversing the king's mandate; and that they "*yielded their bodies*" to be burned if the Lord should not be pleased to protect them. These were new developments for Babylon. When in all the foregone ages had such things been seen in that proud city? One important result of these events is a special decree, forbidding the people of his entire realm to say aught amiss against the God of these Hebrews. Apparently the reason assigned went forth with the decree; viz., "Because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort," a distinct recognition of the God of Israel as higher and mightier than all the gods of the heathen. This decree went over all his realm, — a grand manifesto, setting forth the conviction of this autocrat on his throne in favor of the great Jehovah. Naturally it would carry with it an account more or less full of the circumstances which had called it forth. The king promoted these three. The word rendered "promoted" means "put forward rapidly to higher positions of trust." Why Daniel was not a party with his three brethren, does not appear. Probably his position shielded him from persecution. — *Cowles*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Bernard de Palissy, a native of Agen in France, was a maker of earthenware at Saintes, and distinguished himself by his knowledge and talents. He was a Calvinist; and the French king Henry III. said to him one day, that he should be compelled to give him up to his enemies unless he changed his religion. "You have often said to me, sire," was the undaunted reply of De Palissy, "that you pitied me; but, as for me, I pity you, who have given utterance to such words as 'I shall be compelled.' These are unkindly words; and I say to you, in royal phrase, that neither the Guises, nor all your people, nor yourself, are able to compel an humble manufacturer of earthenware to bend his knee before statues." — *Scripture Treasury*.

II. There is a tradition among the Mohammedans, that Abraham was cast by Nimrod into a furnace of fire for refusing to worship false gods; and the flames, instead of scorching and consuming him, were changed into a bed of jasmines and roses.

III. Some years ago a few ladies met together in Dublin to read and study the Scriptures. One observed, in reading Mal. 3: 3, that there is something remarkable about the expression, "Shall sit as a refiner," &c. One of the ladies promised to call on a silversmith, and report what might be said on the subject. She went accordingly, and, without telling the object of her errand, begged to know the process of refining silver, which he fully described. "But, sir," said she, "do you *sit* while the work of refining is going on?" — "Oh, yes, madam!" he replied: "I *must sit* with my eye steadily fixed on the surface; for, if the time necessary for refining be exceeded in the slightest degree, the silver is sure to be injured." At once she saw the beauty, and the comfort too, of the passage, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." As the lady was leaving the shop, the silversmith called her back, and said he had still further to mention, that he only knew when the process of purifying was complete, by seeing his own image reflected on the silver. — *MacKnight*.

IV. Some one has said that a Christian's afflictions are like a bell, to call the attention of the world to God's power in saving men.

PRACTICAL.

1. How short-lived is the patronage of man! for we find by the preceding chapter that the men who were the objects of royal adoration yesterday are the objects of his fury and his vengeance to-day. Truly we are not to trust in princes nor in man's son. — *Cummings*.

2. He knew the charm, the power, and popular effect of good music. Painting and sculpture are for the eye, music for the ear. Thus he thought he would be sure to make his way to the heart. Some one has sarcastically remarked, that, if you can secure the five senses of men, you may calculate upon all the rest. What was said in sarcasm has too often been fulfilled in fact. — *C*.

3. These Hebrew youths might have urged also the highest possible expediency for bowing down and worshipping the image. Mark how they were situated. They were captives in the midst of Babylon; they were promoted to places of power; they had great means of doing good to their captive countrymen in the midst of the city of their habitation. These youths might have also argued, "If we refuse to worship the golden image, we shall present a very singular aspect; it is the universal worship. Did you ever hear of any man ashamed of being singularly rich? of a woman ashamed of being singularly beautiful? of a man ashamed of being singularly wise? Is it not very odd that men should be ashamed of being singularly religious? They might have argued: "He has been to us a most gracious monarch; he has raised us, in his sovereignty, to places of high power and high honor: and we owe homage to the king, and gratitude to the man." But duty to God was even stronger than gratitude and loyalty to an earthly king. There is nothing more painful than to be obliged to refuse a dear friend what our consciences tell us we cannot give. — *C*.

4. Modern furnaces are persecution, social ostracism, a furnace with which many are threatened who may decline to worship certain images. — *C. and D.*

5. We should rather suffer, and if needs be die, than renounce the gospel. It is a strong statement, but it is a scriptural one. — *Cummings*.

6. The furnace was made seven times hotter, that the deliverance might be so much the more glorious. The wrath of man is made to praise God.

7. Faith could not keep them from the furnace; but it could keep its flames from injuring them.

8. All the fire had done to them was to loose their fetters. Oh, let us not be ashamed of our God! He is always the same God, unchangeable. It may often look dark for us, but God will deliver us; and, if he does it by fire, let us not be afraid, but go on in his way. — *Moody*.

9. They walked with him in prosperity: he did not leave them in adversity. He had doubled their joys, and would now divide their sorrows; Christ is in this world walking with his friends through the furnace of affliction. — *C. and D.*

10. If you will read the history of the Church of Christ, you will find that the most furious opposition has only served to spread its principles, and to add new attractions to those that professed them. All the power of earth and hell cannot burn out one single truth; all the patronage of earth and hell cannot build up one permanent lie. — *Cummings*.

11. You think, if you become a Christian, you will be — what? Thrown to the wild beasts? One might not be surprised if you hesitated. Be cast into the fiery furnace? If so, one might not be surprised that you should pause. But you think only, "If I become a Christian I shall have to give up this profit:" that is all; "I shall have to renounce this pleasure; I shall have to shut up my shop on Sunday:" that is all. And can you hesitate to comply with a clear command from God, because you will lose a little pleasure? — *C*.

12. The people were thus saved from the obligation of worshipping an image. Benefits conferred upon society by the faithfulness of true men. — *C. and D.*

13. And now let us learn this great lesson from all that I have said; that the path of principle is always the highest possible expediency. Never do a thing because it seems expedient, if it be not clearly right. Never hesitate to feel that the thing that is right in the sight of God will be the most expedient. — *Cummings*.

14. Persecution is always of necessity a failure. It may bring outward conformity: it never can change the soul.

15. Real goodness is a great power over men; but it must be tested goodness, — goodness that stands the storm, goodness made brighter by trial.

16. Learn also this last lesson: Christ has been with his church from the beginning of the world. The bush may blaze, but God is in the bush, and it cannot be consumed. His saints may suffer; but their sufferings shall only spread their faith, and glorify their Lord. And all things, the blunders of its friends, the bitterness of its enemies, the silence of its advocates, the opposition of its foes, all things, in height and depth, shall aid the cause of Christ, and prosper that church of which he is the foundation and blessed hope. Amen. — *Cummings*.

LESSON IX.—JUNE 2, 1878.

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL.—DAN. 5. 22-31.

TIME. B.C. 538; about 50 years after our last lesson, and near the close of the 70 years' captivity.

PLACE. Babylon.

RULERS. Belshazzar, king of Babylon, associated on the throne with his father Nabonnedus; Cyrus was king of the Medes and Persians. During this interval were the "seven wise men" of Greece, the Tarquins in Rome, Croesus, king of Lydia, Pisistratus at Athens.

THE CONNECTION.

The moment of the Jewish history which we have now reached coincides with one of the most strongly marked epochs in the history of the world. As far as the course of human progress is concerned, there have been three vast periods, of which two have already passed away. They may be called, in general terms, primeval history, classical history, and modern history. This epoch is the beginning of classical history. It is the epoch in the eastern world when we begin to discern the lineaments and traits of the first teachers of Farther Asia, whose careers are distinctly known to us, and whose influence still lives down to our own time. In the western world it is the date, almost to a year, when Grecian literature begins to throw its light far and wide on every thing that it touches. In the same generation, even in the very same year, we meet the accession of two great potentates in Greece and in the Grecian colonies of Asia Minor,—Pisistratus at Athens, Croesus at Sardis. The same date brings us into the midst of the first authentic characters of Roman history in the reign of the Tarquins. From this time forward the classical world of Greece and Italy occupies the whole horizon of our thoughts, till its own days are numbered by the fall of Rome. And it is exactly this momentous juncture of secular history, this critical pause between the middle and the final epoch of Jewish history, at which we are now arrived. The event when it came to the Israelite captives could have been no surprise. It had been long foreseen by those who sang by the water-side. They were told how, even before the captivity, on occasion of a visit of homage which the Jewish king Zedekiah paid to Nebuchadnezzar in the early part of his reign, Jeremiah had recorded his detailed prediction of the overthrow of Babylon, in a scroll which he confided to Seraiah. Not till he reached the quays of the Euphrates was Seraiah to open and read the fatal record, with the warning that Babylon shall sink, and "shall not rise again from the face of the evils that shall come upon her." (Jer. 51: 61-64; 29: 10.) Deep in its bed the mighty river was believed to have kept its secret as a pledge of the approaching doom. What that doom was, the events now began to disclose. — *Stanley*. Nebuchadnezzar. Beginning to reign B.C. 604, he reigned till about B.C. 561. The fourth chapter of Daniel gives an account of another dream of his, which Daniel interpreted. On account of his pride and irreligion, a period of seven years of madness was sent upon him, probably during the last years of his reign. "The malady is one not unknown to physicians, and is called 'lycanthropy.' The victim thinks himself a beast, and not a man; walks on all fours, ceases to speak, and rejects all ordinary food. The queen, no doubt, exercised the royal power during this incapacitation of the monarch. We are to think of him during this time, not as roaming at large, but confined in the gardens of the palace. Profane history is not without some trace of this extraordinary occurrence. Historians of Babylon place at about the period to which it belongs, the reign of a queen (Nitocris), to whom are ascribed works which others declare to be Nebuchadnezzar's. During the malady the favorite wife of Nebuchadnezzar may have been practically at the head of affairs." — *Rawlinson*. In the valley of the Euphrates is a grass which is succulent, has a mild peppery taste, and is called by the natives, "Nebuchadnezzar's grass;" and recently a large tablet has been discovered, on which were inscribed the reign, madness, and death of Nebuchadnezzar. — *J. P. Newman's "Thrones and Palaces of Nineveh."* The position of Daniel. Daniel was the chief or the head of the astrologers, soothsayers, and magicians of the king of Babylon. They were not enchanters who held communion with evil spirits: they were not diviners. They were men who studied the signs and phenomena of astronomy; and, having no written revelations, they believed that God had written the present, the past, and also some presentiments of the future, in the sky; that the stars were the letters of that revelation. When Daniel, therefore, consented to become their head, he became the patron of science, the principal of a university, the president of a royal society. Daniel, then, as the president of this royal society, — a

student of science, the principal of this learned university, — is introduced into the feast amid its fading splendor, its departing joys, its miserable, degraded, and degrading remains; and the king speaks to him as recognizing him only by name, but not knowing him in person. Daniel was banished from that court he was too honest-spoken a prophet to be very popular there. — *Cummings*.

The feast. For nearly two years Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians, had been encamped around Babylon, in order to take this great capital. He at once saw that its reduction would be no easy enterprize. The walls were of prodigious height and thickness; the number of men to defend them was very great; and, in ordinary circumstances, the only mode of reducing the place would have been by cutting off its communications with the country, and so starving it into a surrender. But, in anticipation of this, Nabonnedus had taken immense pains to store the town with provisions; and it was reckoned to contain enough to sustain the inhabitants for twenty years, — the rather, as the vast area of the city contained large and numerous gardens, in which no small quantities of vegetable produce might be raised. Cyrus caused a line of circumvallation to be drawn around it, with a large and deep ditch; and upon the banks thrown up in excavating it, he built towers at regular intervals, as watch-towers, and stations for the troops on guard. The Babylonians professed themselves to be mightily diverted by these proceedings, believing themselves to be quite secure. — *Kitto*. It was during this siege that a great feast was held by the young Belshazzar, while his father Nabonnedus was away at Borsippa. The account of this feast is given in Dan. 5. A thousand of his lords were assembled at the banquet; and the prince, inflamed with wine and flattery, ordered the gold and silver vessels of the temple to be brought, that he and his wives and concubines and courtiers might drink in them to the praise of their gods. At that moment a hand was seen writing upon the wall in the full light of the candelabra. Belshazzar, his joints unnerved by fear, cried out for the Chaldean astrologers and soothsayers to be brought before him, and proclaimed that the man who could read the writing should be invested with the insignia of royalty, and made third ruler in the kingdom. While the hand moved slowly on from letter to letter, they confessed their inability to read the unknown characters. The king was beside himself with terror, when a new personage appeared upon the scene. The "queen," who addresses Belshazzar in the tone of authority, was probably his mother or his grandmother, and may perhaps be the Nitocris of Herodotus. She alone of all the court remembered the wonders that had been revealed to Nebuchadnezzar by Daniel, who seems to have been deposed from his post as master of the soothsayers. By her advice the king sent for him, and repeated his offers of reward. Rejecting them with disdain, Daniel reproached Belshazzar for not learning from the example of Nebuchadnezzar, and for the crowning insult of that night against God. — *Smith*.

22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled¹ thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

23 But² hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his

¹ 2 Chron. 33: 23; 36: 12. ² vers. 3, 4.

EXPLANATORY.

22. His son Belshazzar. Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar; called son, as Christ is called the son of David. He was young and gay, and was associated with his father Nabonnedus on the throne. He reigned only a year or two. Profane history relates that the capture of Babylon by the Medo-Persians took place in the reign of a Babylonian king called Nabonnedus (or Labynetus), not of one called Belshazzar. He was not of the royal stock of Nebuchadnezzar (but probably married his daughter), and was absent from Babylon at the time of its capture. A very simple discovery, made a few years ago in Lower Babylon, has explained in the most satisfactory way all these apparent contradictions. Nabonnedus, the last native king of Babylon, states that his eldest son bore the name of Bel-shas-ezer, and speaks of him in a way which shows that he had associated him in the government. The latter was intrusted with the command within the city, while the former occupied a stronghold in the neighborhood. — *Rawlinson*. **Knewest all this.** All that Daniel had been relating to him about his grandfather (verses 18-21). He should have taken warning, and not let his pride lead him astray. He erred, not through ignorance, but deliberately and defiantly.

23. Lifted up thyself. Exalted himself, — bore himself on the heights of pride and self-conceit, as if he were equal with God, and could be safe in defying him. **The Lord of heaven.** So called to distinguish the true God from these gods, and to show his superiority even to Bel, the sun, the fire of heaven. God is above all, over all, as heaven envelops the earth, — the God of all that greatness and purity and goodness and power which heaven symbolizes. **Vessels of his house.** From the temple of Bel, where they have been treasured up since the conqueror had

house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised¹ the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which² see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath³ is, and whose are

all thy ways,⁴ has thou not glorified:

24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.

25 ¶ And this is the writing that^{numbered} was written, MENE, MENE, TE^{weighed} KEL, UPHARSIN.^{and divided}

¹ Judg. 16: 23. ² Ps. 115: 5-8. Isa. 37: 19. ³ Acts 17: 28, 29. ⁴ Jer. 10: 23. ⁵ Rom. 1: 21.

carried them from Jerusalem, are brought the vessels of gold and silver, the bowls and the caldrons, and the spoons, the knives, the cups, which had been regarded by the Jewish nation as the very palladium of the state,—all like the 30 chargers and 30 vases of gold which had been made for the temple of Solomon, and had continued there till the captivity of Jehoiachin, and the 1,000 chargers and 400 basins of silver by which Zedekiah had supplied their place, and which were carried away in the final deportation.—*Stanley*. Drink wine in them. Drinking wine from the vessels taken out of Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem was intended as an insult to his majesty. In the current notions of the age, each nation's gods were its patrons and defenders, so that victory over a nation was a triumph over its gods. Chaldeæ, in the person of Belshazzar and his lords, is now exulting over Jehovah, as unable to protect his people against the superior power of their idols. As they drank, "they praised the gods of gold and of silver," as being mightier than the God of the Hebrew people. Hence the time had fully come for the Lord to vindicate his own glory, and crush out this proud and blasphemous dynasty.—*Cowles*. In whose hand thy breath is. Under whose power and at whose disposal is thy life.—*Barnes*. Whose are all thy ways. "Ways" are courses of conduct, designs, purposes, and the like. All these belong entirely to the control of the God of heaven. The king can achieve nothing, nor accomplish any of his purposes, unless the Godhead give permission. This surely is plain and faithful admonition; and probably the king's conscience was smitten by it.—*Stuart*.

24. The part of the hand. The fingers (verse 5). The wall of the banqueting-room was not panelled or draped, but rather a simple, light-colored wall of lime or plaster. Upon a spot of this wall that was especially exposed to the light from the lamp above the king, he suddenly beheld the mysterious hand engaged in writing.—*Lange*. This writing.—They were, as befitted the city which claimed to be the mother of letters, not in new signs or hieroglyphics, but in distinct Hebrew characters; and through their brief and broken utterance there ran a double, treble significance.—*Stanley*. It has been a puzzling question to commentators, why the wise men were unable to translate it. The words are plain, translatable Chaldee; and a Chaldean scholar of the present day, if called upon to read them when inscribed upon any thing, would be able instantly to do so. There have been two or three reasons assigned for this inability on the part of the wise men. One is, that they were written in the ancient Hebrew characters. The difference between the two forms may be as great as between our English letters and the German, or perhaps between the modern English letters and the ancient Saxon or old English character. Others think that the words were inscribed in some dark, mysterious hieroglyphic, to the signification of which there was no key in the possession of the astrologers.—*Cummings*. Even if they could read the letters, it was not possible for them to know the application of these four solitary words; and here was the real difficulty; or else they did not have courage to tell the king his doom, and would rather confess ignorance than to tell of the downfall of the kingdom.

25-28. Mene, the first word, twice recorded, carried with it the judgment that the days of the kingdom were *numbered* and *ended*; Tekel carried the doom that it was *weighed* and found *light*;—*Perez*, the third, that it was *divided* and given to the *Persians* (*Pharsin*),—the first appearance in history of that famous name.—*Stanley*. The literal rendering of the words written on the wall is, "Numbered; numbered; weighed; and divided." Remarkably the last word is plural as it stands in verse 25, but appears in its singular form in verse 28. It is not clear that any special sense attaches to the plural: if so, it should have been in the plural when repeated for the purpose of being interpreted. The English reader would not readily see that Upharsin is nearly identical with *Perez*. It is so, however. The letter U translates the Chaldee prefix for *and*, which, dropped off, leaves Pharsin. Then *in* is the plural termination, and the rest of the difference is due to the change of vowels consequent upon this plural termination. Pharsin is simply the plural form of *Perez*. It is plural, probably, to make it emphatic. So "*Mene*" is repeated, apparently for the sake of intensity. The days of thy

26 This *is* the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

27 TEKEL; Thou art weighed¹ in the balances, and art found wanting.²

28 PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given³ to the Medes and Persians.⁴

29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he⁵ should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

30 ¶ In that night⁶ was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

¹Job 31: 6. ²Ps. 62: 9. ³Matt. 22: 11, 12. ⁴1 Cor. 3: 13. ⁵Isa. 21: 2. ⁶ch. 6: 28. ⁷ver. 7. ⁸Jer. 51: 31, 39.

kingdom are certainly and precisely numbered; and, having now all past, the end has come. Tekel, the first letter being the character for *th*, which is used in Chaldee for the Hebrew *sh*, is identical with *shekel*, which as a noun is a well-known standard weight; and, as a verb, means to *weigh*. In the moral sense, weighing puts one to the test, tries him by the divine standard. So Job said (chap. 31: 6), "Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity." God had thrown Belshazzar upon his great scales of justice and righteousness, and found him utterly wanting. He was not fit to reign longer. The "kingdom divided, and given to the Medes and Persians," predicted one of the great historic facts of the age, — the fall of Babylon, and the subversion of the Chaldean dynasty. It fell before Cyrus, at the head of the combined armies of the Medes and Persians. — *Cowles*.

29. *Clothed Daniel, &c.* Belshazzar lived only long enough to fulfil this promise, and give Daniel these honors. But Daniel cared little for honors under such a monarch at any time, and least of all now, in these last hours of the kingdom. These circumstances, however, may have been his stepping-stone to an equally high position under the next dynasty, and this seems to have been a part of the divine purpose. — *Cowles*. Third ruler. The fact that the Babylonian throne was at this time occupied conjointly by two monarchs is indicated in the sacred narrative by a curious casual touch. Belshazzar proclaims Daniel the *third* ruler of the kingdom. In every similar case (Gen. 41: 40-45; Esth. 10: 3; Dan. 2: 48, 49), the reward is the elevation to the *second* place, the place next to the king. The only reason that can be assigned for the variation in this instance is that the first and second places were both filled (Nabonnedus in the first, his son Belshazzar the second), and therefore the highest assignable reward was the *third* place. — *Rawlinson*.

30. *In that night, Belshazzar slain.* It must be understood that the river Euphrates flowed through the midst of Babylon; and its banks were lined with walls, pierced with many gates, which afforded access to the city. The river then, as at present, overflowed all its banks in the early spring. The inundation is then, in some seasons, so redundant as to prove very injurious to the buildings near the river. To avert such consequences, advantage had been taken of a spacious natural depression of the soil at some distance above Babylon, which had been artificially deepened in part, so as to form a vast reservoir, into which the waters of the river could on occasion be turned, by means of a broad canal, so as for a time almost to exhaust the stream. This great basin, which in its ordinary aspect was a morass, then became a large lake, not less, it is said, than fifty miles in circuit. Now on this important night Cyrus sent up a strong detachment to the head of the canal leading to this lake, with orders at a given time, to break down the great bank or dam that was between the lake and the canal, and so turn the whole current of the river into the lake. — *Kittó*. When all was prepared, Cyrus determined to wait for the arrival of a certain festival, during which the whole population were wont to engage in drinking and revelling, and then silently, in the dead of the night, to turn the water of the river and make his attack. All fell out as he hoped and wished. The festival was even held with greater pomp and splendor than usual; for Belshazzar, with the natural insolence of youth, to mark his contempt of the besieging army, abandoned himself wholly to the delights of the season, and himself entertained a thousand lords in his palace (Dan. 5: 1). Elsewhere the rest of the population was occupied in feasting and dancing (Jer. 51: 39). Drunken riot and mad excitement held possession of the town; the piere was forgotten; ordinary precautions, as the closing of the river-gates (Isa. 45: 1), were neglected. Following the example of their king, the Babylonians gave themselves up for the night to orgies, to which religious frenzy and drunken excess formed a strange and revolting medley (Dan. 5: 4). Meanwhile, outside the city, in silence and darkness (Dan. 5: 30), the Persians watched at the two points where the Euphrates entered and left the walls. Anxiously they noted the gradual sinking of the water in the river-bed (Isa. 44: 27): still more anxiously they watched to see if those within the walls would observe the suspicious circumstance, and sound an alarm through the town. Should such an alarm be given, all their labors would be lost. If, when they entered the river-bed, they

31 And Darius¹ the Median took | and two years old.
the kingdom, *being* about threescore

¹ ch. 9: 1.

found the river-walls manned, and the river-gates fast locked, they would be indeed "caught in a trap." Enfiladed on both sides by an enemy whom they could neither see nor reach, they would be overwhelmed and destroyed by his missiles before they could succeed in making their escape. But, as they watched, no sounds of alarm reached them,—only a confused noise of revel and riot, which showed that the unhappy townsmen were quite unconscious of the approach of danger. At last shadowy forms began to emerge from the obscurity of the river-bed, and on the landing-places opposite the river-gates scattered clusters of men grew into solid columns; the undefended gateways were seized; a war-shout was raised; the alarm was taken and spread, and swift runners started off to "show the king of Babylon that his city was taken at one end" (Jer. 51: 31). In the darkness and confusion of the night a terrible massacre ensued (Jer. 50: 30; 51: 4). The drunken revellers could make no resistance. The king, paralyzed with fear at the awful handwriting upon the wall, which too late had warned him of his peril (Jer. 50: 43; Dan. 5: 5-28), could do nothing even to check the progress of the assailants, who carried all before them everywhere. Bursting into the palace, a band of Persians made their way to the presence of the monarch, and slew him on the scene of his impious revelry. Other bands carried fire (Jer. 50: 32; 51: 30, 32, 58) and sword through the town. When morning came, Cyrus found himself undisputed master of the city, which, if it had not despised his efforts, might with the greatest ease have baffled them.—*Rawlinson's "Ancient Monarchies."*

31. Darius the Median. For an account of this king see next lesson, verse 14. Cyrus was the king of the empire, Darius of the province of Babylon.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Much help and light on this lesson (as well as most others in this quarter) can be obtained from Rawlinson's "Five Ancient Monarchies;" Rawlinson's "Historical Illustrations of the Old Testament;" William Smith's "Student's History of the Old Testament;" Stanley's "Jewish Church," vol. iii. Read on this lesson also Isa. chs. 13, 14, 21, 44-48, where this capture of Babylon is exactly foretold 175 years before the event.

II. Historical illustrations. (1) Belshazzar's fear from a guilty conscience. See Scott's poem of Marmon, Canto I. (2) Sudden fall in the midst of pride: Pope John XXI., Milman's "Latin Christianity;" Cardinal Wolsey in Shakespeare's "Henry VIII.;" Montezuma, Prescott's "History of Mexico," vol. i. pp. 306-316. (3) Belshazzar's fall by means of his own sin, as Sodom was consumed not only by fire from heaven, but also by the bitumen which saturated the soil, and was used in the buildings.

PRACTICAL.

1. Belshazzar's fear. To a man who lives in sin, the unknown is always the terrible. Why? Because we always interpret the events that we cannot understand, in the light of our own consciences.—*Cummings.*

2. Daniel's call. Daniel did not proclaim his religion. He did not thrust himself into the palace of Belshazzar; and because he was faithful to his God, he did not therefore act discourteously toward his king. But the instant he was sent for he appeared, and he acted as a Christian ever will: he did not use his religion in order to obtain political power.—*C.*

3. Not humbled (verse 22). His sin and ruin began in pride. Pride is a sin that hardens the heart in all other sin.—*Henry.*

4. Thou knewest. The worst sins are not sins of ignorance, but defiant, wilful sins.

5. What he was condemned for by Daniel was not that he himself was wrong, but that he had not availed himself of the opportunities he had of being right. Our condemnation at the judgment-day will not be that conscientiously we have believed a lie; but it will be, that we neglected the opportunities of acquiring and making ourselves acquainted with the truth.—*C.*

6. Wise men always learn from the examples and experience of others.

7. (Verse 23.) The most foolish thing we can do is to lift ourselves up against God, against his will, and his law: seeing our very breath comes from him, and all our prosperity or adversity is in his hands.

8. The folly and wickedness of making light of sacred things, or jesting about the Bible or hymns.

9. (Verse 24.) God's judgments come when his precepts and examples and mercies do not make us good.

10. (Verse 28.) Every man's days of prosperity are numbered when he disobeys God.

11. **The balances of God.** (Verse 27.) (1) *What they are.* (a) Conscience. Every man has this, accusing or excusing. Merciful provision to keep us right. This balance may be falsified; loaded with indifference, seared with sin. (b) Reason given to each, to understand, think, compare. (c) Truth. Bible. This too may be wrested. For our own sake, we should seek to keep the balances in good order. (2) *What is weighed in them.* (a) *Men.* Those that seem heavy often prove light. (b) *Actions.* Those that appear good are proved deficient. (c) *Words.* Those that sound true are proved false. (d) *Motives.* Those we thought honest and pure have their hollowness revealed, — *wanting!* — J. C. Grey.

12. God is represented as weighing all men; all their motives, their ends, their characters. — C.

13. (Verse 30.) God's judgments are sure and swift.

14. The very neglect and disobedience of God, which deserves punishment, is the means through which it comes upon men: as Belshazzar's fall, through his careless, neglectful pride; as ruin of intemperance, through the wine-cup.

15. Nations rarely fall before a foreign aggressor; their ruin or their glory is, under God, within themselves. Nations die suicides: they are seldom or never destroyed by any force from without. — C.

LESSON X. — JUNE 9, 1878.

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN. — DAN. 6: 14-23.

TIME. B.C. 537. Daniel about 85 years old. Darius reigned only 538-536, when Cyrus assumed the sole sway.

PLACE. Babylon, in Babylonia; one of the provinces of the great Medo-Persian empire.

RULERS. Cyrus, king of Medo-Persian empire; Darius, king of Babylonian province; other rulers as in last lesson.

THE CONNECTION.

After the fall of Babylon as described in the last lesson, and Darius had become king of Babylonia, Daniel is promoted to the highest position next to the king. The kingdom as here spoken of is Babylonia proper, and not the whole of that vast realm, embracing several distinct nationalities, which was brought under the sway of Nebuchadnezzar. Darius himself was a sort of deputy or viceroy under Cyrus, and Babylonia was virtually a province in the great Medo-Persian empire. Daniel was pre-eminent, not only in wisdom and executive ability, but in his disinterested devotion to the public weal. While the other high officers were selfish and corrupt men (as is usual), the king could not but see that Daniel was thoroughly a good man, devoted to the welfare of his country, and unselfishly true to the interests of his king. Such a model of excellence, so far surpassing and so uncomfortably eclipsing themselves, was keenly cutting to those corrupt officers, and aroused their bitterest hostility. So they sought to find some fault in his official life, but they sought there in vain. He was both wise and faithful, and hence left them no ground of accusation there. Abandoning all hope of finding any occasion even for slander against Daniel in the line of his official conduct, they set themselves to make an occasion in the line of his religion. This is avowedly their only hope. They know he is not an idolater, but is a conscientious worshipper of the true God. They know him to be a praying man. With satanic cunning they shaped their proposed law to take the king by the bait of his low vanity, and to entrap Daniel through his known decision and firmness in the worship of his God. It was the best compliment they could pay Daniel. Darius was a weak and vain king, utterly unfit to wear a crown, else he would have asked, "What can be the motive of these men in proposing such a law? What! must no child ask bread of his father for thirty days, save under pain of being cast to the lions? Must no friend ask favor of friend, save under such a penalty? What can this proposal mean? Who can be the better for such a law?" Plainly, the appended exception, "Save of thee, O king," was so grateful to his vanity that it blinded his dull eye to the monstrous nature and possible bearings of this law. Daniel saw in an instant that this law was planned for his destruction: yet without one moment's debate with his love of life, or fear of lions, with his heart full of firmness, prayer, and trust, he hastened home to his house, and to his accustomed chamber of prayer; and there — his window open, not closed as if he would conceal his devotions, but open and toward Jerusalem as the place of God's visible glory, and the locality of his earthly mercy-seat — he kneeled three times a day with prayer and

14 Then the king, when he heard ^{these} words, was sore displeased ¹ with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

15 Then these men assembled

unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

16 Then the king commanded, and they brought ² Daniel, and cast

¹ Mark 6: 26. ² Jer. 26: 14. Acts 25: 11.

thanksgiving as aforetime. Blessed man! We love thee for thy firmness, and yet more for thy precious faith in Him who is both thy God and ours. These men assembled, all intensely eager to see if their scheme was working well, and moreover apparently aware of his accustomed hours of devotion. They find him praying; and now they feel sure of his ruin. They hasten to the king, and artfully begin with referring to the decree, the standing law of the realm, for these thirty days. When the king had recognized it, they bring out the fact that Daniel has broken it, putting this in the most offensive light possible, even for slander; "regardeth not thee, nor the decree which thou hast signed." That same Daniel whom thou hast promoted so excessively and so unwisely has no proper regard for thee, O king! He prays to others as much as he pleases, despite of thine own law. — *Cowles*.

14. The king. Darius the Mede, then 62 years old. This personage is one of the enigmas of sacred history. Till lately it was the fashion to identify him with the Cyaxares whom Xenophon introduces, in the "Cyropædia," as the son of Astyages. But in the great prophecy of Isaiah it is Cyrus that takes Babylon; and even in Daniel the Persians are the conquerors. Darius is too old to be identified with Xenophon's Cyaxares; and his father's name is *Ahasuerus*, which has no affinity with Astyages, but which is the very name of *Cyaxares*, the father of Astyages. This is but one of many arguments in favor of identifying Darius the Mede with Astyages himself. We know that Cyrus treated his dethroned predecessor with the greatest honor, which he may have carried so far as to yield him the outward rank of supreme king during his lifetime. The testimony of Herodotus, and indeed of his own fate, to the weak character of Astyages, agrees entirely with the impulsive and vacillating conduct of Darius toward Daniel and his enemies. Some chronological difficulties still remain; but, on the whole, it seems most probable that Cyrus committed the civil government, with the whole royal authority, to Astyages (Darius), while he himself was completing his new conquest, for a period of two years (B.C. 538-536), and that on the death of Darius he assumed the sole sovereignty (B.C. 536). — *William Smith*. A Mede, who was "the pride of the Assyrians" (Abydenus), must almost necessarily be a prince who had ruled over those two nations. Such a prince had been made prisoner by Cyrus, some twenty years before his capture of Babylon; and it is in accordance with what is elsewhere related of him, that he should have advanced this monarch to the post of Babylonian satrap. In this case, the Oriental respect for regal rank would have been likely to show itself in the assignment of the royal title to one who had formerly been a great monarch. This solves the chief difficulties of Daniel's narrative. To this it may be added that profane history speaks distinctly of a king Darius more ancient than the son of Hytaspes (B.C. 521, successor of Cyrus, from whom the silver coin known as the "daric" took its name). This Darius may have been Darius Medus. — *Rawlinson*. These words (verses 12, 13). The accusation of Daniel as having prayed. Sore displeased. The king is chagrined, and ashamed of himself, that he allowed himself to be caught in this snare. Now for the first time he sees the envious and mean spirit of his officers in obtaining from him that decree, and bites his lips in shame that he could have been so beguiled and entrapped. — *Cowles*. He labored to deliver him. In what way, it is not said. Probably by inquiry whether the statute might be changed, or a precedent found, or whether the evidence of the guilt was clear, or whether he might be pardoned. — *Barnes*.

15. Law of the Medes and Persians. In this two principles are involved: one, the existence of a settled law or rule by which the king himself, theoretically at any rate, is bound, and which he cannot alter; the other, the inclusion under this law or rule, of the irrevocability of a royal decree or promise. Both of these principles are recognized as Medo-Persic by profane writers. It was applied to Cambyses, one of the most despotic of the Persian monarchs (Herodotus iii., 31), and Xerxes, son of Darius Hytaspes (Herodotus i., 109-111). — *Rawlinson*.

16. The king commanded. According to Oriental custom, the execution in this case, as in that under Belshazzar (ch. 5: 29) and Nebuchadnezzar (ch. 3: 19), was to follow immediately on the sentence. The season of prayer at which Daniel was discovered would seem to have been at noon.

him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver¹ thee.

17 And a stone² was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed³ it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

18 ¶ Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him.

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice

¹ ch. 3: 15, 17. Ps. 37: 39, 40. ² Lam. 3: 53. ³ Matt. 27: 66.

This will allow ample time for the preparation of the edict, and the execution the same evening. The accusers were evidently in hot haste. — *Lange*. Den of lions. This is a new kind of punishment, not previously mentioned in Scripture; and that it first occurs here at Babylon, is a remarkable fact, showing the accuracy of the sacred writers in their references to the manners and usages of different nations. We have the conclusive evidence of monuments brought to light by modern travellers, on the sites not only of Babylon, but of Susa also, representing lions destroying and preying upon human beings. — *Kittó*. In a depression four feet deep was found a lion of dark gray granite, 10 feet long, standing over a man with outstretched arms. Here, no doubt, was the lions' den into which Daniel was thrown; and this sculptured lion, with a man beneath unharmed, was to commemorate the wonderful deliverance of the prophet. — *Newman's* "Thrones and Palaces of Nineveh." Den. The word *den* means properly a pit, or cistern; and the idea is that the den was underground, probably a cave constructed for that purpose. It was made with so narrow an entrance that it could be covered with a stone. — *Barnes*. Similar to those connected with the Roman amphitheatre, from which it probably differed in having a horizontal opening in the flat roof, through which the condemned were thrown to the lions, in addition to a door at the side by which the beasts were introduced into the den. — *Lange*. Thy God . . . will deliver thee. The heathen believed in the interposition of the gods at times, in favor of their worshippers. The king had heard of the deliverance of the three youths in ch. 3, and hence augurs Daniel's deliverance. I am not my own master, and cannot deliver thee, however much I wish it: "thy God will." Kings are the slaves of their flatterers. Men admire piety to God in others, however disregarding him themselves. — *J. F. and B.*

17. A stone. Probably a large flat stone was the upper opening, or a stone rolled against the mouth of the den to prevent all escape. So a stone was placed against the opening of Christ's tomb (Matt. 28: 66). Sealed it. The importance attached to a seal in the East is so great that without one no document is regarded as authentic. The document, especially among the Assyrians and Babylonians, was itself often made of baked clay, sealed while it was wet, and burnt afterwards. But in many cases the seal consisted of a lump of clay, impressed with the seal, and attached to the document by strings. In a somewhat similar manner, doors of tombs or other places intended to be closed were sealed with lumps of clay, noticed in Herodotus II., 121. — *Henry W. Shillott*. With his own signet. The king's seal guaranteed Daniel from being killed by them, should he escape the lions. — *J. F. and B.* The signet of his lords. This was their guaranty that the king should not release Daniel secretly, after the lords had gone home. All this rendered his deliverance more striking, and more surely marked it as the work of God.

18. Fasting. The idea that lies at the basis of fasting is grief so deep that it takes away the desire for food. The king was grieved at the loss of Daniel, but that grief was greatly strengthened by his consciousness that the evil came upon him through his own weakness and sin. Prayer for Daniel's safety was doubtless joined with his fasting. Instruments of music. It was usual among the ancients to have music at their meals. There is a variety of interpretations of this word. The Greek, Latin, and Syriac say, "No food was brought;" others say "concubines," or "dancing girls." It is impossible to determine which is most correct. — *Barnes*. Sleep went from him. Another mark of his great grief.

19. Very early. With the dawn. Arose with trepidation as well as haste: so the word implies.

20. Lamentable voice. Cries out with a sad voice, indicating his grief and anxiety. Though he had expressed to Daniel his confidence that God would deliver him, yet he still asks the question as one who would feel better assured by the evidence of his senses. — *Cowles*. The living God.

unto Daniel: *and* the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever.

22 My God hath sent his angel,¹ and hath shut² the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: foras-

much as before him innocency³ was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

¹ ch. 3: 28. ² Heb. 11: 33. ³ Ps. 18: 20, 24; 26: 6.

The God who gives life, and preserves life. So different from the dead idols of the king. Doubtless Daniel had taught him about the living God, when the king was making his efforts to save Daniel; and his night's long grief may have led him to see that all true trust must be in a living God. *Servest continually.* In all places and circumstances. He was no intermittent Christian. Only such a servant of God has any right to expect God's deliverance and help in time of need. All our previous life and character have to do with the answers to our prayers and our expectations from God. *Able to deliver.* No doubt he was able. The only real question was whether, in God's wisdom, it was best to deliver him in this way, or to hasten his reward in the unspeakable joys of his heavenly home.

21. *Live forever.* The common salutation in addressing a king. There might be more than mere *form* in this. — *Barnes.* Did he have any thought of that life here, that repentance unto life on the part of the king, which would open to him the door to true living forever?

22. *Sent his angel.* Daniel does not say whether the angel was visible or not; but it is probable that he was, as this would be to him a manifest token of the favor and protection of God. It is no more absurd to suppose that God employs angels to defend his people, or to impart blessings, than that he employs one human being to convey important blessings to another. As a matter of fact, the favors God bestows upon men are mostly imparted by the instrumentality of others. As this principle prevails everywhere on earth, so it may elsewhere; and God may employ the instrumentality of higher beings to defend or rescue his people. — *Barnes.* *Innocency in me.* Daniel casts no severe reproach upon the king. Indeed, the original rather expresses a genial and kindly feeling: Daniel "talked with the king." With beautiful modesty he ascribes his deliverance to God's own hand alone, through his angel, and very properly asserts his innocence of any wrong in this matter, either toward God or toward his king. He could not admit that he had done any harm toward the king by offering his prayer to the God of heaven. A law so intrinsically wicked he could not obey, *ought* not to obey, and was consciously guilty of no wrong against the law-making power in disobeying. We may suppose Daniel to have had a sweet sense of the presence of God by his angel while spending the night in the den with those hungry lions. There they were, their savage nature and clamoring appetites held in firm subjection, and God's own hand in it visibly present to his eye, and consciously to his innermost soul. That was a night of mingled prayer and praise. Is it not safe for all men to trust God in the path of known duty, though it lead into a lion's den? Nay, is it not more than safe — even gloriously blessed — to live so near to God, and to see his angels present in such forms of power and glory for the protection of his trusting people? Who would not welcome such an experience as that of Daniel, and rejoice to make it his own? — *Cowles.*

23. *Believed in God.* All this deliverance came through faith (Heb. 11). Darius punished Daniel's enemies by casting them into the same lions' den into which they had cast Daniel. They were taken in their own net; and they well deserved their fate, though Daniel himself would not have approved of the king's course toward them. Then Daniel's God was proclaimed as the true God throughout the kingdom; and one man's trial and faith made known to multitudes the truth of God. Daniel continued to prosper during the remaining year or year and a half of Darius's reign, and into the reign of Cyrus, who began B.C. 536. How long in this reign he lived, we do not know. His last vision was in the third year of Cyrus, when he must have been near ninety years old.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Christians are saying to the world either that God is *false* to his promises, or that God is *true*. You dishonor him by unbelief. You honor him by faith, the utmost honor you can give him. A German writer gives this incident in the life of Johannes Bruce, the founder of the order of the Carmel

ites, who, though a Romish priest, was a saint indeed, distinguished for his love to God and his faith. The convent was poor; and the friars, dependent on charity for daily bread, were often compelled to console themselves with the passage, "Man does not live by bread alone." One day the brethren found, when they had assembled for dinner, that their whole stock of food was a single piece of dry bread. They sat down; they asked God's blessing upon their crust. Then Johannes arose, and poured forth such words of encouragement and consolation concerning the love of Christ and the great promises he had given his people, that all of them arose delighted and refreshed, and, without partaking of their bread, returned to their cells. They had scarcely reached them, when the bell rang at the convent-gate, and a man entered with a large basket of provisions, which were carried, with a letter, to the prior, who was on his knees praying. He read; the letter dropped from his hands, and he began to weep bitterly. The porter, surprised, said, "Why do you weep? Have you not often said that we should weep for nothing but our sins?" Johannes replied, "Brother, I do not weep without reason. Think how weak the Lord must see our faith to be, since he is unwilling to see us suffer want a single day without sending visible aid. He foresaw that before evening we should despond, unless he sent immediate help to our faith by means of this charitable gift. It is because we possess so little confidence in the rich Lord in whom we are encouraged to trust, that my tears flow." — *From sermon by Charles Finney.*

II. Look over your lives, O Christians! and you cannot find one hour when God's promises have failed you. Look over the history of his people, and it is full of promises fulfilled; but there is not a fragment of a broken promise to be found. When Elisha's servant was afraid because the armies of Syria were besieging them in Dothan, Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened; and the servant saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots round about Elisha. If God touches our eyes, we too shall see all our own life and all history full of God's fulfilled promises round about us. As when Milton's archangel spoke, —

"To confirm his words, out flew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty cherubim."

So God speaks a promise, and out fly millions of facts and experiences to confirm his words.

III. The Roman noblemen could give no greater proof of their confidence in their city and army, than when they bought the land on which their Carthaginian enemies were encamped around the city. And we can give no greater proof of our confidence in God, than by trusting Him in the land which our enemies, darkness and sickness and trouble, seem to possess, and acting as if He were their master, and mightier than they all.

IV. "When I was here in 1867, there was a merchant who came over from Dublin, and was talking with this business man in London; and, as I happened to look in, this business man in London introduced me to the man from Dublin. The Dublin man said to the London man, alluding to me, 'Is this young man all O O?' Said the London man, 'What do you mean by O O?' Said the Dublin man, 'Is he Out-and-Out for Christ?' I tell you, it burned down into my soul." — *D. L. Moody.*

PRACTICAL.

1. **Daniel's exaltation.** The true Christian is ever the greatest patriot. — *Cummings.*
2. Virtue will excite the enmity of bad men.
3. We should pray towards the cross as Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem.
4. Pride and self-conceit is almost sure to get its possessor into trouble.
5. **Displeased with himself** (verse 14). Usually the one we should be most displeased with is ourselves.
6. **Could not deliver him:** So the sinner can find no way to deliver himself from the law of God, or to escape the consequences of his sin. Only in Christ is his help.
7. **No decree changed** (verse 15). Unchangeable laws or rules are for God only to make. No man is wise enough, or has foresight enough, to make rules that cannot be changed. Only obstinate fools never change.
8. **Den of lions** (verse 16). When the world sees Christians, like Daniel, thus condemned, set apart for punishment and inevitable death, it exclaims, "God hath forgotten him: he trusted in God that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he hath pleasure in him." But, amid all the taunts of the world, the child of God can hear the still small voice, the voice of his Father in the skies, sounding in his heart, unspent by the distance through which it passes in its transit, and saying, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." — *Cummings.*
9. **Serveest continually.** The only true way to serve God is Daniel's way. Grasshopper Christians, who take a leap in God's service during a revival, and then sit still in cold and trying times when their activity is most needed, are of very little account in God's kingdom.

10. Sleep went from him (verse 18). All the opiates that physicians can prescribe will not give sleep unless God is pleased by a conscience cleansed in the blood of Jesus to give his beloved sleep. And, when there is sin in the conscience, what awful, what mysterious power it has!—*Cummings*.

11. The living God (verse 20). Men tell us that we worship a dead Christ. It is not so: we worship and love a living Christ, who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

12. Shut lions' mouths (verse 22). Whenever God lets his children go into dangers like the lions' den, he will ever guard them from all harm. The only path of safety is where duty leads, though the way is among lions. No doubt Daniel would have perished in some other way, had he proved unfaithful now.

13. Believed God (verse 23). He, as we all are, was saved by faith, a faith that led him to obey God at all hazards. No other faith would have saved him.

14. His enemies fell into the "pit which they had digged, and into the snare they had laid."

15. Effect on the world. The means of conversion to others are not only the truths that Christians speak, but the lives that Christians lead, and the death that Christians die. Sick-beds have exceeded pulpits in persuasive eloquence, and dying martyrs have made conversions that living ministers have never been honored with.—*Cummings*.

LESSON XI.—JUNE 16, 1878.

MESSIAH'S KINGDOM.—DAN. 7: 9-14.

TIME. B.C. 539; in the first year of Belshazzar.

PLACE. Babylon.

RULERS. Belshazzar, co-ruler with his father Nabonnedus, over Babylonian empire; Cy us, king of Medes and Persians; the Tarquins at Rome.

THE CONNECTION.

After completing the personal history of Daniel, the book turns back a year or two from our last lesson, and records another vision of Daniel. This vision covers the same ground as the one given in ch. 2. It foretells the same general history of the future under different symbols, and involves the same difficulties, and is subject in its latter part to the same two interpretations. For the account of these, see notes on Lesson VII., and the list of authorities there given on either side, for a fuller discussion and unfolding. The salient points of the world's history are symbolized not as a great statue with its head of gold, but as a succession of beasts. The Babylonian empire is a lion, noble and bold and kingly, with eagle's wings to mark its swiftness, and the height to which its ambition soared. Then followed the Medo-Persian world-empire, as a bear, more fierce, warlike, cruel, than the lion, but inferior in strength and courage, devouring many nations. Next came a leopard, rapid and impetuous, symbolizing the Macedonian empire. It had four fowl's wings to intensify its swiftness to the four quarters of the earth; and four heads, the four kingdoms into which it was divided at the death of Alexander, and also, perhaps, the intellectual power that should then become prominent, "the kingdom of brains." Then arose a fourth beast, so peculiar that no name was given to it, more terrible than all the others. It had ten horns, explained as kings or kingdoms, and a little but boasting horn sprang up among them, and absorbed three of the kingdoms; it had the eyes of a man, and spoke great things. Some, as we saw in Lesson VII., interpret this of the Greco-Syrian kingdom, which followed Alexander, and make the little horn to be Antiochus Epiphanes. But with most English interpreters the whole description seems to fit far more perfectly the Roman Empire, seen by Daniel in the far-off dim future, with Popery, with its triple crown and great boasting, and eyes like a man to see and control, for the little horn, and all to be broken and destroyed by the coming Messiah's kingdom. Then came that part of the vision which is our lesson to-day.

9 ¶ I beheld till the thrones were | days did sit, whose garment³ was
cast down,¹ and the Ancient² of | white⁴ as snow, and the hair of his

¹ ch. 2: 44. ² 1 Cor. 15: 24, 25. ³ Isa. 9: 6. ⁴ Ps. 45: 8. Phil. 3: 9. ⁵ Rev. 1: 14.

EXPLANATORY.

9. Thrones cast down. "Cast down" is not (as the English reader might suppose) overthrown, demolished, but means *firmly set*, preparatory to being used as a royal judgment-seat. Ps.

nead like the pure wool: his throne¹ was like the fiery flame, and his wheels² as burning fire.

10 A fiery³ stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto

him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood⁴ before him: the judgment⁵ was set, and the books were opened.

11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the

¹ Acts 2: 30, 33. ² Ezek. 1: 15, 16. ³ Ps. 50: 3. Isa. 66: 15, 16. ⁴ 1 Kings 22: 19. Ps. 68: 17. Heb. 12: 22. ⁵ Rev. 20: 4, 12.

11: 4-6. — *Cowles*. Ancient of days. This is equivalent to "the Eternal." It is the representative of one venerable in years, sitting down for the purposes of judgment. — *Barnes*. He is doubtless the God of Israel, the same as the Most High. — *Lange*. Garment white as snow. To symbolize the purity and innocence of the judge. Consult Ezek. 1: 26; Ps. 104: 2; 1 Tim. 6: 16, which mention the light, the symbol of holiness, as the garment of God. — *Lange*. Hair like wool. Another symbol of age, of "eternal existence." All these indicate his pure and kind intentions to purify his people from their sins. — *Cook*. Throne the fiery flame. Flashing like flaming fire, and apparently composed of it. — *Lange*. Wheels. Wheels are an expressive symbol of power and rapid motion. This throne is on wheels, and has the aspect of fire and flame. So in Ezek. 1, the visible glory of Jehovah appears upon a throne, which itself reposes upon a "firmament" or elevated platform, supported by four living creatures who are singularly connected with living wheels. Here also is the aspect of fire (Ezek. 1: 13). It should be borne in mind, that Ezekiel and Daniel were both residents in Chaldaea, and were therefore familiar with those very peculiar modes of representing the divine attributes which appear in the ruins of Nineveh as exhumed within the last thirty years. Also, that they were contemporary; that Ezekiel wrote his first chapter B.C. 595 (see ch. 1: 2), and Daniel this chapter about B.C. 540; i.e., 55 years later; so that Daniel might have had the writings of his elder brother before him many years. Hence, perhaps, their close resemblance. — *Cowles*.

10. A fiery stream. Fire and the shining of fire are the constant phenomena of the manifestation of God in the world, as the earthly elements most fitting for the representations of the burning zeal with which the holy God not only punishes and destroys sinners, but also purifies and renders glorious his own people. — *Keil*. Thousand thousands. Thousands of attendant ministering angels. The fact that they ministered to him shows them to be, not culprits at his bar, but servants awaiting his command. To "stand before him" is also the customary attitude of his attendant angels. — *Cowles*. The judgment was set. The vital question on this passage is, Does it refer to the final and general judgment, or to providential judgments *in time*, for the destruction of the fourth beast and his horns? I adopt the latter view, and defend it on the following grounds: (1) The general final judgment is *not in place here*; would have no connection with the subject in hand. On the contrary, an allusion to God's providential judgments upon guilty nations *is in place here*, precisely so, being the very thing that such blasphemous hostility to his kingdom and people calls for and should lead us to expect. (2) In the government of God over men, individuals will be judged at the end of this world, and punished or rewarded in the next; but nations can be punished only *in time*, — only in this world, — for the sufficient reason that they exist as nations only here. They are not known as nations after this life. The awards made at the final judgment are upon *individuals* only. Hence if this judgment falls on the fourth beast and his horns, it must be in this world; it cannot be at and after the end of it. (3) The declared result and outcome of this judgment is that this fourth beast "is destroyed, and his body given to the burning flame" (verse 11). (4) But further, the distinctive characteristics of the final judgment are *not* here. These are, (a) that it takes place at the end of the world; (b) is preceded by the general resurrection; (c) embraces all the human race from the beginning to the end of time, and even the fallen angels; (d) that men are judged in it as individuals and not as nations; (e) in the final judgment, Jesus Christ is to be the judge. In this, the judge is "the Ancient of days," the Eternal Father (see verse 13); (f) its results are not transient, as these appear to be, but eternal, even the eternal award of destiny to the righteous and to the wicked. All these points are characteristic features of the final judgment. They are all wanting here. — *Cowles*. Books were opened. The books of record in which the good and bad deeds of men were recorded, that they may serve as a basis of the sentence to be pronounced upon men by God. — *Lange*. As to these books of record, see Illustration II.

11. Great words which the horn spake. The little kingdom that arose among the ten kingdoms into which the fourth great universal kingdom was divided (verses 7, 8, 24, 25) spake haughty, blasphemous, overbearing words against God and his people. As to the kingdom referred to under the image of this little horn, there are the same two interpretations mentioned in Lesson

horn spake: I beheld *even* till the | stroyed, and given to the burning
beast was slain,¹ and his body de- | flame.

¹ Rev. 19: 20.

VII. I. Then there was to spring up in the midst of the ten horns, a "little horn," politically and physically small, but, from its pretensions and its assumptions, terrible and influential. This little horn was to pull down three of the ten horns. Now, is there any one fact in history by which this is borne out, and which shows how truly this prediction has been fulfilled? It should be "a horn," having political power, but should have eyes. The origin of the Greek word *ἐπίσκοπος*, from which is derived the English word "episcopacy," signifies, "one that oversees." The ecclesiastical character of this little horn is therefore plainly indicated by the peculiar feature that it was to have eyes for seeing, or superintending, those that were beneath it. And not only was it to have eyes, but it was also to have a mouth, speaking great things; a preacher of proud pretensions, or a doctor of despotic laws; an enactor of canons, or rules for government and for regulation. Then you will notice another feature in it, that it was to uproot three out of the ten kingdoms. Now, if I apply this little horn where I think it is indisputably applicable, to the Papal power that now reigns at Rome, I think you will find every feature of the prophecy met and embodied in the history of that power. The three kingdoms that were rooted up by this little horn were the three kingdoms of the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and the Lombards, who were, after a succession of troubles, rooted up by the Papacy, and constituted into the states of the Church; and the pope wears upon his head at this very moment, the tiara, or three-crowned cap, to denote the three kingdoms or horns which he rooted up, and over which he now reigns. The pope claims jurisdiction over all the kings and governments of the earth. But these "great words" are said to be spoken specially against the Most High. What are the assumptions of the popes? Another feature that identifies this little horn with the Papal power is the prediction that "he will make war with the saints." The whole history of Europe is painfully conclusive evidence of this feature. Again, the length of time during which this politico-ecclesiastical power was to make war with the saints. It is in verse 25: "They shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of a time." Every writer upon prophecy is satisfied that a "time" signifies, in prophetic language, a year; "times," two years; and "the dividing of a time," or "half a time," half a prophetic year. But, as a prophetic day stands for a literal year, so a prophetic year consists of 365 prophetic days, or 365 literal years. A time, times, and half a time, make then, when added together, 1,260 days, called by St. John in the Apocalypse, 42 months. We are to understand, then, that the saints of God were to be given into the power of the ecclesiastico-political despotism for 1,260 years. If we begin to count this period from the time when Justinian issued his pandects, and constituted the pope not only the ecclesiastical pontiff of Christendom, but armed him also with power to punish heresy with death, then the 1,260 years ended at the epoch of the French Revolution, in 1792; and certainly, by the blow it then received, anything like the power of persecution on the part of the Papacy has been destroyed. Its principles remain; its ability only is broken. If, however, you begin to count the 1,260 years from the time when the pope first put forth his claim to be universal bishop, A. D. 256, this calculation would bring you down to the year 1517, when the Reformation began, and the Papal power was broken. — *Cummings*. If you count from the decree of the emperor Phocas, A. D. 606, the 1,260 years will bring the time to 1866, about which time the Papacy received another deadly blow. If you count from A. D. 752, under Pope Stephen, the 1,260 years will bring us A. D. 2012, still in the future. As prophecy had a gradual beginning, it is likely it will have a gradual ending. For this view consult Barnes's Notes on Daniel, and Cummings's Lectures on Daniel. II. It is under the sternest demands of the laws of interpretation, that the fourth beast represents the dominion of Alexander's successors, and the little horn, Antiochus Epiphanes. It is altogether in favor of this Antiochian theory, that it requires no violation of the laws of prophetic language in respect to notations of time. The "time, times, and dividing of time," I simply make three and a half years, following Daniel's own use of these words in ch. 4: 16, 23, 25, 32. This theory adequately meets the demands of history. Its complete fulfilment proven without violence to the laws of interpretation on the one hand, or to the facts of history on the other, closes the argument in its support. (1) *Three of the first horns removed before the little horn*. In his first account of the vision, Daniel said (verse 8), "I considered the horns, and behold there came up among them a little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots." The two kings next preceding in the Syrian line were certainly "plucked up," did certainly "fall," before him. The one king in the Egyptian line he did certainly humble and "subdue." These three, therefore, I must account as the three horns referred to in ch. 7: 8, 20, 24. (2) *"He thought to change times and laws."* The legitimate

12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

13 I saw in the night visions, and,

behold, one like the Son of man¹ came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

¹ Matt. 24: 30; 25: 31; 26: 64. Rev. 1: 7, 13; 14: 14.

sense of these words, as written by a Jew and for Jewish readers, can be nothing else than changing the religious institutions given by God through Moses. Let us now notice the historic fulfilment of this clause. On this point the books of the Maccabees are the best of testimony. The first book witnesseth thus: "Moreover King Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom, that all should be one people, and every one should leave his laws. For the king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, that they should follow the strange laws of the land, and forbid burnt-offerings and sacrifices and drink-offerings in the temple, and that they should profane the sabbaths and festival days, and pollute the sanctuary and holy people; set up altars and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh and unclean beasts; that they should also leave their children uncircumcised, and make their souls abominable with all manner of uncleanness and profanation: *to the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances*" (1 Mac. 1: 41-50). (3) The time, three and a half years. On the historic period now before us, Josephus states (Proem to his Jewish War, sect. 7) that Antiochus, called Epiphanes, seized Jerusalem, and held it three years and six months." In the same work (L. 1: 1), of the same Epiphanes: "He caused the customary daily sacrifice to cease three years and six months." (4) Another prominent point in respect to this little-horn king is his *destruction*. As already suggested, verses 11, 12, plainly intimate that, being for the time the representative and embodiment of the fourth beast, he falls by some striking form of judgment. "So that the worms rose up out of the body of this wicked man, and, while he lived in sorrow and pain, his flesh fell away, and the filthiness of his smell was noisome to all his army." "Thus this murderer and blasphemer, having suffered most grievously, as he had treated other men, so died he a miserable death in a strange country in the mountains" (1 Mac. 6: 1-13, 16). — *Cowles*. For fuller development of this view, see Lange's Commentary on Daniel, and Cowles's Notes on Daniel. Beast was slain, &c. The destruction of the kingdom represented by the fourth beast, as if the body of a beast were destroyed. — *Barnes*. Burning flame. Figurative, representing a fierce and utter destruction, such that fire would be the natural emblem to express it.

12. Rest of the beasts. The other three great world-powers. Dominion taken away, &c. The thing said of them here is that, although they lost their supreme dominion, the sceptre over the kingdoms of the East passing into other hands, yet they had still for a season a sort of existence without sovereignty. — *Cowles*.

13. Son of man. Jesus Christ; so called to point out an organic connection with, or membership in, the human race. One belonging to the human race, but wearing the form of God. — *Lange*. With clouds of heaven. As from the skies. Heaven the source of this kingdom, and its power. (See Matt. 24: 30; 26: 64. Mark 13: 26.) Came to the Ancient of days. He came to God as the source of power. Even the Messiah, in setting up his kingdom, receives it at the hand of the Father. Of course this event will not occur literally as described in this verse. All that this symbol fairly means must be that the kingdom of the Messiah on earth was received from God. — *Barnes*. Its vital question is, *Does this event take place at the close of Christ's first advent, or shortly after his second?* Does this passage describe his coming to set up his New Testament "kingdom of heaven;" or, on the contrary, some inauguration of Christ as king after the universal resurrection and the general judgment? One or the other it must be. I hold the former view most decidedly, for the reasons that follow: (1) This kingdom and this setting-up of it must be the same as that of chap. 2: 44. *There was a kingdom which should "never be destroyed."* Here is a kingdom universal, everlasting, and never to pass over to other hands. This is the fifth kingdom of this vision: that is the fifth in that. The identity is complete. (2) That kingdom and this too are, beyond all question, the very "kingdom of God" (otherwise called "kingdom of heaven") of which so much is said in the New Testament. (3) The New Testament determines the precise point of Christ's inauguration over this kingdom to be at his ascension. For, when John Baptist and our Lord began to preach, they both said, in the same identical words, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Further, the Epistles definitely locate this inauguration immediately after his resurrection and ascension: e.g., Eph. 1: 20-22; 1 Pet. 3: 22. Compare also John 3: 35; Matt. 11: 27; Rom. 14: 9; Phil. 2: 9, 10; Heb. 2: 9, 13; 12: 2; Rev. 3: 21; 17: 14. Does the question arise, Why should Christ have been inaugurated then? Was he not "Lord of all"

14 And¹ there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his do-

minion is an everlasting² dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not³ be destroyed.

¹ Ps. 2: 6-8. Matt. 28: 18. John 3: 35. 1 Cor. 15: 27. Eph. 1: 20-22. ² Ps. 145: 13. ³ Heb. 12: 28.

before? Jesus, as *incarnate*, had not been in heaven before. The man Jesus had not been visibly recognized there up to that hour. The divine Lord of all appears there now in new relations; and it was fitting that *in these new relations* he should be publicly recognized, and duly inducted into his exalted station and dignity. — *Cowles*.

14. (See on Lesson VII.) *Dominion, &c.* For this we pray in the doxology to the Lord's Prayer. This is the final universal kingdom. This was *given* the Messiah at his inauguration; but it is being still accomplished in fact, and every day we are drawing nearer to its complete fulfilment. No matter which interpretation we may take of "the little horn," this kingdom of the Messiah, this stone cut out without hands, is still breaking in pieces the great image, is still conquering the other kingdoms, but will soon hold in actual possession the dominion and glory and kingdom.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. The everlasting kingdom. There is no reason to doubt that the right and the true and the holy shall have the victory. All dominions hostile to Christ must give way. All kingdoms incompatible with his must be dissolved. The kingdoms of this world have their symbols in the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the fourth dreadful and terrible beast; and by a law universally proved, their passions and discord shall precipitate their own destruction. But Christ's kingdom has nothing anarchical, because it has nothing sinful in it; it has not one element of decay, because into it nothing that defileth can enter. Suns shall grow pale, stars shall become dim; the crescent shall wane, the crucifix shall fall from the hands of him that holds it; and Christ's kingdom shall extend over all the earth, and all shall bless him, and be blessed in him. We see already tokens of that day. I take a bright view of the coming days. What progress do knowledge, science, education, Christianity, the Bible, make everywhere throughout the world at this moment? Do we not see the whole human family drawing nearer to each other? Do we not see the two great nations, America and England, speaking a tongue that promises more and more every day to become the tongue of the whole world? Do we not see all languages, however diversified, becoming reducible to two, three, or four at the very most, — Christians becoming less earthly, and Christianity less alloyed? What are these but the tokens of the approaching glory; voices in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord; messengers sent before to announce that the bridegroom cometh? I see flowers of paradise begin to bloom in many a desert. I see upon all sides the sea of barbarism and superstition begin to ebb, and many a dove take wing, and fly over the length and breadth of the world's chaotic flood, giving tokens that the Prince of peace is on his way, warning us that the sound of his approach already breaks upon the ear. Let us hail the twilight; let us urge on, as far as we can, the coming day. — *Cummings*.

II. The books opened. (See Hitchcock's "Religion of Geology," pp. 409-444, and "The Stars and the Earth.") According to Dr. Hitchcock, our words, our actions, and even our thoughts, make an indelible impression on the universe. Creation is a vast sounding-gallery, a vast picture-gallery, a universal telegraph. Proved (1) by the doctrine of mechanical re-action. The air is one library, on whose pages are forever written all that man has ever said or woman whispered. On the solid earth not a footprint that does not permanently change the whole globe. (2) By optical re-actions. Taking all the worlds together, they at this moment contain a vast panorama of the world's entire history. The universe encloses the pictures of the past like an indestructible record. (3) *Electric re-actions*. There is an electric influence excited by every muscular effort, or thought passing through the brain. There may be no spot in the universe where the knowledge of our most secret thoughts and purposes may not be transmitted on the lightning's wing. (4) *Chemical re-actions*. The photographic influence pervades all nature; and we cannot say where it stops. (5) *Mental re-action*. Indirectly through matter, directly by the influence of mind upon mind. If we admit that mind acts upon other minds, can we tell how far this influence extends? Our lightest thoughts and feeblest volitions may reach the outer limit of intellectual life, and their consequences meet us in distant worlds and far down the track of eternity.

PRACTICAL.

1. The kingdoms of the earth are not beyond the knowledge or control of God.
2. Since what God has foretold of the history of the world has exactly come to pass, what he reveals to us of the future life will also come to pass.

3. The prophecies a great proof that the Bible is the Word of God.
4. (Verse 9.) The true God is eternal, and of spotless holiness and love.
5. "Our God is a consuming fire," not only to destroy the wicked, but to burn up all sin from the hearts of his people.
6. (Verse 10.) Every nation and every person must meet God at the judgment, to give an account of all the deeds of the body.
7. God keeps a record of all we do and are on his books. Nature itself may be the books of God; for all is recorded on the universe.
8. (Verse 11.) The proud, and all who oppose God, must be destroyed.
9. The Messiah's kingdom comes from God: all its power is heavenly and divine, and not earthly. Its means and weapons are divine and heavenly; and men always fail when they undertake to spread God's kingdom by the instrumentalities which worldly kingdoms use.
10. God became the "Son of man," that we might know him, and realize his sympathy and love. One hand of our salvation is in heaven, whither God would draw us; the other reaches to our present nature, that it may grasp our souls in order to lift them up.
11. God's kingdom is certain to prevail, and fill all the earth. Therefore we should join that kingdom. Therefore we should take courage to aid its progress, and keep good hope. Therefore no opposition nor dark days should discourage us.

LESSON XII.—JUNE 23, 1878.

THE DECREE OF CYRUS.—2 CHRON. 36 : 22, 23.

TIME. B.C. 536. The dawn of classic history.

PLACE. Babylon.

RULERS. Zerubbabel, governor of the Jews; Cyrus, king of Persian empire. Pisistratus, tyrant of Athens; Servius Tullius, king of Rome; Æsop, in Greece; Croesus in Lydia; and Confucius in China, — flourished during the captivity.

PROPHETS. During the captivity Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Obadiah, and Daniel; of whom Daniel was still living, and wrote part of his book after this time.

CONNECTION.

One of the great events of Hebrew history is the restoration of the captive Jews from Babylon to their native land. The duration of the captivity is commonly put in both prophecy and history at 70 years. Strictly speaking, the captivity cannot be dated wholly from any one epoch. As we have seen, there were several successive deportations of captives, the earliest having been in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (when Daniel was carried away); the latest of much note at the point of the capture and destruction of the city, in Zedekiah's 11th year, 18 years later than the first. The edict of Cyrus for the restoration was 70 years after the first deportation of captives; the restoration bearing date B.C. 536, the first deportation B.C. 606. The antecedents of this restoration fall naturally into two classes, — (a) the moral and religious, (b) the political. (a) On the moral and religious side, we learn especially from the prophetic books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, that the Jews in their captivity had humbled themselves greatly before God, were confessing their sins, and seeking his face with all their heart. In point as illustrating their moral and spiritual state, see Jer. 29: 10-14, and 30, and 31; Ezek. 36: 24-38, and 37; and Dan. 9, and also Ps. 102: 13-24. Inasmuch as the captivity occurred at all only for moral reasons, the Lord having caused his people to go into this captivity only for their great sins, so there could be no restoration until their moral state was effectually changed; till their hearts were turned from idols, broken in penitence and confession of sins, and lifted to God in prayer for mercy. On these conditions God had all along promised his pardon and favor. These conditions being in a good degree fulfilled, he returned to his people in mercy; their captive chains were broken, and they were free to return to their land. (b) On the political side, God made Cyrus, king of the Medo-Persian empire, his great instrument — first, to conquer Babylon and annex it to his empire; then to issue his decree inviting all Jews who would to return to their own land, particularly encouraging them to rebuild their temple, and aiding them in this enterprise. The terms of this decree are memorable. — *Smith*.

22 ¶ Now¹ in the first year of | of Jeremiah might be accomplished,
Cyrus king of Persia, that the word | the LORD stirred up the spirit of
of the LORD spoken by the mouth | Cyrus² king of Persia that he

¹ Ezra 1: 1, &c. ² Isa. 44: 28; 45: 1, &c.

EXPLANATORY.

These two verses, the last of Chronicles, are exactly the same as the first two verses of Ezra.

22. In the first year of Cyrus. The first year of his sole reign as king of Babylon. He was king of Persia years before. Babylon was captured by Cyrus and Astyages (i.e., Darius the Mede), B.C. 538. For two years Darius was the formal king, and then died B.C. 536, when Cyrus assumed the sole sovereignty. It seems most probable that Cyrus committed the civil government with the whole royal authority to Astyages (Darius), while he himself was completing his new conquest for a period of two years, B.C. 538-536. Cyrus (the sun). He reigned from B.C. 558-529. He was the son of Cambyses a Persian noble, and of Mandane daughter of Astyages. Astyages commanded him to be put to death as soon as born; but he was saved by the humanity of Harpagus, an officer of the country and a herdsman, who was to expose him to death in the wilderness. He was brought up by the latter as his son, in a secluded mountain region, where he soon became the leader of his playfellows, who chose him as their king. Having in this capacity scourged the son of a distinguished Median, he was brought before Astyages, to whom his bold answers and his features soon betrayed his origin. — *American Cyclopædia*. As the restorer of the Jews, and as "called by his name" by the prophet Isaiah, no heathen monarch fills a more important place in sacred history. But we must not confound his high destiny with his personal character. Even when God, by the mouth of Isaiah, says of Cyrus, "he is my shepherd, to perform all my pleasure," "my anointed, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him," he adds, "I have sur-named thee, *though thou hast not known me*." The Cyrus of history is an Asiatic conqueror in an age of despotic force, though a favorable specimen of his class. His history proves that he had many of the virtues of a hero and a king; but, if we seek further for his likeness, we must look rather at Zingis Khan or Timour, than at the Cyrus of the "Cyclopædia." Of the many conflicting versions of his history which were derived from the romantic stories of the Persian poets, that of Herodotus is the most probable and consistent. He dethroned Astyages, the last king of Media, and transferred the rule over the Medo-Persian empire to the royal family of Persia. The capital was fixed at Agbatana (Ecbatana). The change was naturally alarming to the three great monarchies of Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt. The news of the revolution effected by Cyrus decided Croesus, king of Lydia, on an attempt to check the growth of the Medo-Persian power. Croesus was defeated on the Halys, and shut up within the walls of Sardis. Sardis was surprised, and Croesus taken prisoner; and Cyrus was master of his kingdom to the Egean sea. An interval of 15 years followed before the final conflict with Babylon (described in the notes of Lesson IX.). — *William Smith*. First of the ancient conquerors, Cyrus is known to us as other than a mere despot and destroyer. It can hardly be without ground that he who, by the Hebrew prophet, was hailed not merely as a liberator and benefactor of Israel, but as an inaugurator of a reign of righteousness and truth, should, in Grecian literature, alone of the barbarian kings, have been represented as the type of a just and gentle prince. — *Stanley*. Persia. Persia proper, or Persis, includes the highlands on the north-east of the Persian Gulf. — *Smith*. Word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah. See Jeremiah 25: 11, 12; 29: 10. The 70 years of desolation prophesied of by Jeremiah commenced in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jer. 25: 1, 12; compare Dan. 1: 1), or B.C. 606, and should therefore have terminated B.C. 536. The idea that the duration of the desolation was determined in the divine counsels by the number of the neglected sabbatical years, and that the enforced fallow was intended to compensate for previous unlawful cultivation, is not found in Jeremiah, and appears only in verse 21, and in Lev. 26: 34, 35. There is no reason to suppose that the neglect was continuous, but there had been about 70 occasions on which the law of the sabbatical year (Lev. 25: 4-7) had been violated. — *Cook*. See connection. Stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. Jewish tradition holds that Daniel, occupying a high position in the court of Cyrus, brought to his attention the prophecies of Isaiah which even name Cyrus as God's servant (Isa. 44: 28-29, and 45: 1-4). There is no good reason to question this Jewish tradition. We know that Daniel stood high at the court of Cyrus, had ready access to his ear, was familiar with Hebrew prophecy, was aware that God's time for the restoration had come, and was laboring and praying for this result. In fact, Daniel was raised up of God for this emergency as truly as Cyrus. The men whom God makes for a great emergency always come to time, and do their duty. — *Cowles*. The ancient Babylonian religion was a sensual idolatry,

made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

23 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven

but the Persian which Cyrus brought in believed in but one God, and in the conflict between the two religions, Cyrus naturally took sides with the Jews.

23. All the kingdoms of the earth. These words are explained from the wide extent of the Persian Empire. When Cyrus conquered Babylon, he had already subjugated to himself almost the entire Eastern Asia, even to the Indian Ocean. Afterwards he entered even into Egypt and Ethiopia. — *Zochler.* The Lord God of heaven. In the original Persian, the document probably ran, "Ormuzd the God of heaven." But the Persian would naturally be accompanied by a Hebrew transcript, and in this transcript "Jehovah" would seem to have been taken as the equivalent of Ormuzd. — *Cook.* Two things are specially remarkable in this passage, — the strongly-marked religious character, very unusual in heathen documents, and the distinctness with which it asserts the unity of God, and thence identifies the God of the Persians with the God of the Jews. Both these points receive abundant illustration from the Persian cuneiform inscriptions, in which the recognition of a single supreme God, Ormuzd, and the clear and constant ascription to him of the direction of all mundane affairs, are leading features. In all the Persian monuments of any length, the monarch makes the acknowledgment that "Ormuzd has bestowed on him his empire." Every success that is gained is "by the grace of Ormuzd." The name of Ormuzd occurs in almost every other paragraph of the Behistun Inscription. No public monuments with such a pervading religious spirit have ever been discovered among the records of any heathen nation as those of the Persian kings; and through all of them, down to the time of Artaxerxes Ochus, the name of Ormuzd stands alone and unapproachable as that of the supreme Lord of earth and heaven. — *Rawlinson.* Charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem. The phraseology of this proclamation, independently of the express testimony of Josephus, affords indisputable evidence that Cyrus had seen, probably through means of Daniel, his venerable prime minister and favorite, those prophecies in which, 200 years before he was born, his name, his victorious career, and the important services he should render to the Jews, were distinctly foretold (Isa. 44: 28; 45: 1-4). — *J. F. and B.* Who among all his people. Not merely in Babylon, but in Assyria and Media, and wherever the tribes of Israel were scattered. — *Woodworth.* Let him go up. He invited the people of God throughout his empire to go up to the work, and charged those among whom they dwelt to help them with gold and goods and cattle. The response to this act of noble generosity — for such is its true character, whatever secondary motives may have been mixed up with it — was the more easy, as the captive Jews had preserved their genealogies, and their patriarchal constitution under their princes. It is even said that they had a kind of ruler, called the "head of the captivity," or "captain of the people;" but this is very doubtful. So the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, with the priests and Levites, whose families are enumerated by Ezra, rose up to the work. Their neighbors made them liberal presents, beside free-will offerings for the temple; and Cyrus caused his treasurer Mithredath to deliver the vessels of the temple which Nebuchadnezzar has carried away, 5,400 in number, to Sheshbazzar, or Zerubbabel, the prince of Judah, who was the leader of the migration. Thus, as the Israelites had gone forth from the first captivity laden with the spoils of Egypt, so now they returned from the second enriched with the freewill offerings of Assyria, to be consecrated to the service of Jehovah. But they carried back greater riches than all the treasures of Persia, in the moral gains of their captivity. The number of the people forming the first caravan, whom Ezra reckons not only by their families, but by the cities of Judah and Benjamin, and other tribes to which they belonged, with the priests and Levites, amounted in all to 42,360, besides 7,367 men-servants and maid-servants. They had 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 asses. These numbers may seem small, in contrast to the former population of Judaea; but they are large, as compared with the enumeration given above of the several captivities. They no doubt included many of the ten tribes, for Cyrus addressed his proclamation to all the servants of God throughout the empire; and it was responded to, not only by the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, but "by all whose spirit God had raised." In fact, though the new nation are called *Jews*, the distinction of the tribes disappears except in their pedigrees. Those, however, who undertook the journey were doubtless a considerable minority of the captives, who, as directed by Jeremiah, had settled down quietly in the land of their captivity, built houses, and planted vineyards. Some followed at a later period. Others remained behind, forming what was called the "dispersion;" and how numerous these were in all the provinces of the empire, we see in the book of Esther. — *William Smith.* After so long an interval, very few of the original captives could be alive. The great body of the existing generation had been born and bred in Babylon, which was thus, in fact, their native country. As a body, they thrive well there; and ceasing to take interest, unless in certain

given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem,* which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.

localities, in the culture of the soil, that change of habit and pursuit took place among them which has ever since been maintained. They became then traders, peddlers, money-changers, money-lenders, jewellers, and possibly dealers in old clothes. Upon the whole, they were so comfortable and satisfied with their position, that, although unshaken in their attachment to Judaism, they felt but little disposition to forego their realized advantages and break up their homes, to encounter the perils of the wilderness and to undergo the privations and trials to which a small settlement in a deserted country must expect to be exposed. The largest, the wealthiest, and the noblest portion of the nation, therefore, took no part in the movement, except by their sympathies, and by their bountiful contributions in furtherance of the object. That the great body of them were of the poorer sort, is shown, among other circumstances, by the fact that, although there were 42,360 Jews who returned, they had but 7,367 male and female servants among them all; and still more by the circumstance, that the long and perilous journey across the desert was performed by the greater part of them on foot; that, of those who did ride, the far greater part were on asses, animals never now employed on such journeys; and that, indeed, the whole number of animals could scarcely have been sufficient for the women and children, even on a low computation. By the fourteenth month after their return, they were enabled to lay the foundations of the temple. — *Kittó*. The return from the captivity was the starting-point from which we may trace a gradual enlightenment of the heathen world by the dissemination of Jewish beliefs and practices, such dissemination being greatly helped by the high estimation in which the Jewish system was held by the civil authorities. — *Rawlinson*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Jewish captivity. The benefit of affliction. We are told of a merchant who lost his all in a storm, and then went to Athens to study philosophy. He soon discovered that it was better to be wise than to be wealthy, and said, "I should have lost all unless I had lost much."

II. God's people in affliction. Stars shine brightest in the darkest night; torches are better for beating; grapes come not to the press till they come to the press; spices smell best when bruised; young trees root faster for shaking; gold looks brighter for scouring; juniper smells sweetest in the fire; the palm-tree proves the better for pressing. Such is the condition of God's people: they are most triumphant when most tempted, most glorious when most afflicted. — *Bogatsky*.

III. Restoration of Zion. The two rabbis. It is stated that two Jewish rabbis were crossing Zion hill in Jerusalem, and saw a fox run by; one wept at the sight, while the other cheerfully smiled. He who had laughed inquired the cause of the other's tears. "How can I help weeping," he replied, "when I see the threatenings against our holy city so exactly fulfilled?" — "And for that reason I rejoice," said the other, "for the prophecies of its glorious restoration are equally plain and numerous; and, as the punishment has been literally executed, we may the more certainly expect the accomplishment of the promises."

PRACTICAL.

1. The word of the Lord (verse 22). We see the wonderful and exact foreknowledge of God. These prophecies fulfilled are a proof of the inspiration of the Bible.

2. We see that in actual life, man's free will and God's foreknowledge are in perfect harmony, and by both together his work among men is accomplished.

3. God's punishments are sure. He will fulfil them to the letter as these 70 years were all fulfilled.

4. The years of captivity were 70, because they refused to obey God in keeping the sabbatical years he commanded. Lev. 25: 1-7. They thought to enrich themselves by taking to themselves what belonged to God, and it made them poor instead.

5. God's mercies are as sure as threatenings. Because he punishes when he threatens, we may know that he will fulfil what he has promised.

6. God's unsearchable wisdom, which advances towards the end in the most improbable manner. — *Schultz*.

7. Stirred the spirit. Whatever good is done at any time, God stirs up the spirit to it, puts thoughts into the mind. Whatever good is done at any time for the Church of God, he must have the glory of it. — *Henry*.

8. Those are much honored who are stirred up to begin with God, and to serve him in their first years. — *Henry*.

9. The redemption from Babylon is a type of the redemption from the bonds of the devil and of hell. — *Schultz*.

10. Build a temple (verse 2). Rejoice if we have opportunity and means to build God a house, or to be one in helping build it.

11. The work of the redeemed is (1) to be pilgrims on the march to the holy city, (2) to build the temple of God, (3) to honor God therein and be saved. — *Schultz*.

12. God brings good out of man's evil, as by this captivity the Jews were purified from idolatry, the heathen learned of the true God, and the scattered Jews were the means by which the gospel was quickly spread to all nations.

THIRD QUARTER.

LESSON I. — JULY 7, 1878.

BIRTH OF CHRIST THE LORD. — LUKE 2: 8-20.

TIME. B. C. 4. According to the chronology which regulates our present system of dates, Jesus was born in the year of Rome 754, and in the first year of the present system of reckoning: i.e., A. D. 1. But it is now generally agreed that this places his birth some years too late. Herod died in the year of Rome 750; i.e., B. C. 4. Jesus was born during the lifetime of Herod, and certainly within less than two years previous to his death (Matt. 2: 16). — *Abbott*.

PLACE. Bethlehem in Judæa; five miles south of Jerusalem, crowning the top and sides of a narrow ridge or spur which shoots out eastwardly from the central mass of the Judean hills. A little to the eastward is a kind of plain, where it is supposed the shepherds tended their flock.

RULERS. Cæsar Augustus, emperor of Rome, and of nearly all the known world; Herod the Great, king of Judæa, but subject to Augustus.

CIRCUMSTANCES. A time of general peace throughout the world.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

The writer of this Gospel is universally allowed to have been Lucas (an abbreviated form of Lucanus, as Silas of Silvanus), though he is not expressly named either in the Gospel or in the Acts. From Col. 4: 14, we learn that he was a "physician;" and by comparing that verse with verses 10, 11, in which the apostle enumerates all those of the circumcision who were then with him, but does not mention Luke, though he immediately afterwards sends a salutation from him, — we gather that Luke was not a born Jew. Eusebius makes him a native of Antioch. If so, he would have every advantage for cultivating the literature of Greece, and such medical knowledge as was then possessed. That he died a natural death, is generally agreed among the ancients; Gregory Nazianzen alone affirming that he died a martyr. The time and place of the publication of his Gospel are alike uncertain. But we can approximate to it. It must at any rate have been issued before the Acts; for there the "Gospel" is expressly referred to as the same author's "former treatise" (Acts 1: 1). Now, the book of the Acts was probably published early in the year 63. Before that time, then, we have reason to believe that the Gospel of Luke was in circulation, though the majority of critics make it later. If we date it somewhere between A. D. 50 and 60, we shall probably be near the truth. — *J. F. and B.*

INTRODUCTION.

Though the home of Joseph and Mary was at Nazareth, the sure word of prophecy had declared that the Christ should be born at Bethlehem, the native place of his royal father David; and this was accomplished by the agency of the Roman emperor. A decree was issued by Augustus for a census of "all the world" over which his power extended; that is, the Roman Empire and its subject kingdoms. The sacred pride of the Jews in their genealogies would lead them to hasten to the head cities of their tribes and families. Thus Mary, though about to become a mother, traversed with her husband the length of the land, from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the royal city of David, to

whose house they both belonged. The caravansary was crowded with wealthier and more important travellers; so they sought shelter in a stable. Here Mary gave birth to the Saviour of the world, and made his cradle in the manger of the cattle. — *William Smith.*

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of

the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

EXPLANATORY.

8. **In the same country.** The fields in the neighborhood of Bethlehem. **Shepherds.** Why to shepherds? Because the scribes and Pharisees were corrupt, ready to be cut to the heart with envy; while the shepherds were incorrupt, like the patriarchs and Moses, who were shepherds. —

• **Origen.** What a mysterious fitness that that gospel, of which the characteristic was that it was preached unto the poor, should have been first proclaimed to simple shepherds! — *Ellicott.* **Abiding in the fields.** It has been argued from these words, that Christ could not have been born on Christmas Day. But travellers in Palestine differ widely in their meteorological accounts, as the seasons themselves vary in different years; but some, who give us the result of several years' observations in Jerusalem, agree in the statement, that during the rainy season, from the end of October to March, there generally occurs an interval of several weeks' dry weather between the middle of December and the middle of February; and that during the month of December the earth is clothed with rich verdure, and sowing and ploughing go on at intervals. Schubert says that the period about Christmas is often one of the loveliest periods of the whole year. The precise date of the nativity can certainly be no matter of vital importance, else it would have been revealed to us. It is enough for us to know that the Saviour was born in the *fulness of time*, just when he was most needed. — *Schaff.* **Keeping watch . . . by night.** Keeping the night-watches. The employment of the shepherds required them to be abroad in the fields by night, as well as by day. They were doubtless in the habit of taking their turns of watching and sleeping; so that during the whole night some of the company would be awake. — *Ripley.*

9. **The angel of the Lord;** or, an angel. **Came upon them.** Suddenly appeared to them. There is something so unspeakably great and glorious in this union of earthly obscurity with heavenly splendor, of angels with shepherds, of the form of a servant with the majesty of a king, that the well-known saying, "It is not thus invented," can never be better applied than to the whole narrative. — *Van Oosterzee.* **The glory of the Lord.** This is a familiar phrase in the Old Testament Scriptures, and denotes the shechinah, or visible symbol of the divine presence (Exod. 24: 16. Num. 14: 10). — *Jacobus.* The brightness or glory which is represented as encompassing all heavenly visions. — *Olshausen.* **They were sore afraid.** The fear we find so often mentioned in the sacred narrative, when man comes into immediate contact with the supernatural and the holy. Consciousness of weakness, of guilt, and of ill-desert, is made vivid by such manifestations of holiness and power, and fills the soul with awe.

10. **Fear not.** The same words of assurance and comfort as Gabriel spoke first to Zacharias, and then to Mary. The good tidings of a Saviour, of peace and forgiveness, of God as a loving father, can alone take away fear from the soul. **Good tidings of great joy.** The spiritual darkness which had covered the earth for 4,000 years was about to be rolled away. The way to pardon and peace with God was about to be thrown open to all mankind. The head of Satan was about to be bruised. Liberty was about to be proclaimed to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind. The mighty truth was about to be proclaimed, that God could be just, and yet, for Christ's sake, justify the ungodly. Salvation was no longer to be seen through types and figures, but openly and *face to face*. The knowledge of God was no longer to be confined to the Jews, but to be offered to the whole Gentile world. The days of heathenism were numbered. The first stone of God's kingdom was about to be set up. If this was not "good tidings," there never were tidings that deserved the name. — *Ryle.* **To all people.** More properly, *to all the people*; that is, to the whole Jewish nation. But it was the purpose of God, that ultimately every nation on earth should enjoy the benefits of the Messiah's reign. — *Ripley.* The gospel is sweeter to us, because it is for all the world.

11. **Unto you.** You shepherds, Israel, mankind. — *Bengel.* See Isa. 9: 6, — "Unto us a child is born." It is a *birth*, — "the Word is made *flesh*." When? "*This day*." Where? "*In*

11 For unto you¹ is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped

in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel² a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

¹ Isa. 9: 6. ² Ps. 103: 20. 21.

the city of David.—in the right line, and at the right spot; where prophecy bade us look for him, and faith accordingly expected him. How dear to us should be these *historic moorings of our faith!* With the loss of them, all substantial Christianity is lost.—*J. F. and B.* In the city of David; i.e., Bethlehem. This refers the shepherds to the prophecy now fulfilled (Mic. 5: 2). **A Saviour.** It is the same word as “Joshua” in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New. Very striking and instructive is the selection of this name. The Son of God came down from heaven to be not only the Saviour, but the King, the Lawgiver, the Prophet, the Priest, the Judge, of fallen man. Had he chosen any one of these titles, he would only have chosen that which was his own. But he passed, by them all. He selects a name which speaks of mercy, grace, help, and deliverance for a lost world. It is as a deliverer and Redeemer that he desires principally to be known. **Christ the Lord.** That is, the anointed Lord, or the Lord Messiah (Hos. 1: 7). *Christ*, in the Greek, means the same as Messiah in the Hebrew. “The Lord” here answers to the term Jehovah in the Old Testament. Christ is Jehovah.—*Jacobus.* This is the only place where these words come together; and I see no way of understanding this *Lord*, but as corresponding to the Hebrew *Jehovah*.—*Alford.*

12. **This shall be a sign.** Of the truth of the angel's words. The finding of the babe as he described would prove the truth of his announcement of a Saviour. As if at once and forever to rectify the common notions of earthly glory which they probably, with most of the Jews, connected with the appearance of this great personage, the angel added, “And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe”—where? Wrapped up in goodly Babylonish garments—reposing beneath canopies of state, upon a couch of ivory and gold? Nay, but “wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.”—*Kitto.* The babe. There can be no doubt that this expression would have been better translated “a babe.”—*Ryle.* **Swaddling clothes.** That is, not garments regularly made, as with us, but bands or blankets that confined the limbs closely, and were intended to prevent distortion.—*Jacobus.* **Lying in a manger.** The enrolment had drawn so many strangers to the little town, that “there was no room for them in the inn.” As the inn was full, there was no alternative except for Mary to repair to that part of the establishment which was usually appropriated to the cattle, which often belonged to these inns; or perhaps it may have been as Dr. Thomson suggests, — “that the birth actually took place in an ordinary house of some common peasant, and that the babe was laid in one of the mangers, such as are still found in the dwellings of the farmers of this region. **Mangers.**” It is common to find two sides of the one room where the native farmer resides with his cattle fitted up with these mangers, and the remainder [of the room] elevated about two feet higher for the accommodation of the family. The *mangers* are built of small stones and mortar in the shape of a box, or rather of a kneading-trough; and when cleaned up and white-washed, as they often are in summer, they do very well to lay little babes in. Indeed, our own children have slept there in our rude summer retreats on the mountains. The word *house* used by Matthew (2: 11) “does not much favor the idea” held by many that the birth took place in a *cave*. Yet as this idea is as old as the middle of the second century, it is entitled to profound respect. Over the *cave* selected by that primitive tradition, the empress Helena, mother of Constantine, erected the magnificent Church of the Nativity, which still stands (or rather its successor built by Justinian), as an object of profound interest to the Christian traveller in the East. It is the oldest Christian church in the world. The *cave* which it encloses is 38 feet by 11, and at the eastern end a silver star in a marble slab designates the spot of the birth.—*Thomson.* The inns or caravansaries of the East, called khans, are large enclosures built at convenient distances along the road, for the accommodation of travellers. They are for shelter and protection at night. The building is commonly of stone, built round an open square with sheds or stalls for cattle; and over these, often, are chambers for the traveller. No provisions are furnished for man or beast, but the traveller must carry his own supply. There is usually a well of water in the enclosure. The cattle sometimes are tied in the open square, while the people lodge in the chambers above, around the sides of the building and opening into the court or square.—*Jacobus.*

13. **A multitude.** This was to express the homage of angels to Christ, and to his redemption work. The homage of the angels confirmed the faith of the shepherds.—*Jacobus.*

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,¹ good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

¹ Isa. 57: 19.

14. **Glory to God.** O happy shepherds, who alone among men were ever privileged to hear the songs of heaven! And the song was well worthy of angels, expressing the greatest and most blessed things in words so few that they become, to an acute apprehension, almost oppressive by the pregnant fullness of their meaning. First, and chief of all, **GLORY TO GOD**—for devising a means for man's renovation and redemption which "the angels desire to look into;" and which they have not failed, and will not forever fail, to extol in their songs on high as the most renowned demonstration of the glory of His goodness, — *Kitto*. **In the highest.** This is capable of several meanings. 1st (and probably the true one), in the highest strains, or in the highest possible manner. 2d, *Among the highest*; i.e., among the angels of God. 3d, In the highest heavens—indicating that the praise should not be confined to the earth, but should spread throughout the universe. 4th, The words "God in the highest" may be equivalent to the most high God. — *Barnes*. **On earth peace.** He that was born was the Prince of peace, and came to reconcile God with man, and man with his brother; and to make, by the sweetness of his example, and the influence of a holy doctrine, such happy atonements between disagreeing natures. It was probably not without important significance with regard to this fact, that it had been so ordered, in the providence of God, that at the time this child was born, an unwarred and universal peace pervaded the Roman Empire, and through its vast extent man lifted not up sword or spear against his fellow. Augustus having then composed all the wars of the world, caused in sign thereof the gates of the temple of Janus to be shut up, — being only the third time this had occurred during the seven centuries which the history of Rome then covered. — *Kitto*. **Good will.** God expresses in Christ, as he cannot in nature, his great good will to men. He desires only their happiness and goodness. He does not love to punish, but seeks with all his heart that men should repent, and turn, and live. Christ is the living, eternal proof of God's good will to men. — Others put "good will" in the genitive case, so that it reads, "Peace, &c., to men of good will." The external testimony is strongly in favor of this reading, so that the angelic hymn consists of two, not of three clauses. There is a threefold correspondence. (1) between glory and peace, (2) between the highest (heavens) and the earth, and (3) between God and man. The sense is, **Glory be to God among the angels in heaven for sending the Messiah; and peace or salvation on earth among men of his good pleasure.** — *Philip Schaff*.

16. **They came with haste.** Let us mark the prompt obedience to the heavenly vision displayed by the shepherds. We see in them no doubts, or questionings, or hesitation. Strange and improbable as the tidings might seem, they at once act upon them. They went to Bethlehem in haste. They found every thing exactly as it had been told them. Their simple faith received a rich reward. They had the mighty privilege of being the first of all mankind, after Mary and Joseph, who saw with believing eyes the new-born Messiah. — *Ryle*.

17. **They made known.** The news was too good to keep. Every one who finds Christ wants to make him known.

19. **But Mary kept all these things, &c.** Mary appears here, as well as in ch. 1: 26 and 2: 51, richly adorned with that incorruptible ornament, which an apostle describes (1 Pet. 3: 4) as the highest adorning of woman. Heart, mind, and memory are here all combined in the service of faith. — *Van Oosterzee*.

20. **And the shepherds returned.** Their extraordinary experience does not withdraw them from their daily and ordinary duties, but enables them to perform them with increased gladness of

heart. Their names, unknown on earth, are written in heaven; and their experience is the best example of the first beatitude (Matt. 5: 3). — *Ibid.*

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Infidels have objected to the scheme of Christianity, because it seems impossible that the great God should send his only Son to die on this little corner of his universe, this grain of sand among infinite worlds. But note (1) that God's way is to care for the minutest as carefully as the greatest, as we see in all that the microscope has revealed. (2) If the world was worth creating, it is worth saving. A man's birth is of less importance than his new birth. (3) The size of the place is no measure of the importance of the issues decided there. The effects of the battles of Waterloo, Antietam, or Gettysburg, have nothing to do with the size of the places or the number of inhabitants. The battles there affected the whole world. So this earth may be the battle-ground between good and evil, for the universe. (4) The sympathy and thoughts of any family turn naturally and oftenest to the wandering ones; and so all the universe may be looking and longing for the return of this lost world.

II. The angels' appearance to the shepherds when engaged in their usual occupation. The wise woman of Medina went long pilgrimages to find the Lord, but in vain; and despairing she returned to her daily duties, and when there engaged she found the Lord she had elsewhere sought in vain. — *See Trench's Poems.*

III. The same truth is taught in Longfellow's Legend Beautiful, in his "Tales of a Wayside Inn." When Christ appeared to the monk who had long sought him, the monk was about to neglect his usual duties, but finally decided to go and do them. Returning, he found the vision of Christ still in his cell.

"And this is what the vision said,
'Hast thou staid I must have fled.'"

IV. Toward the close of the war of 1812, the country was shrouded in deep gloom; the harbors were blockaded, commerce destroyed, products mouldering in the warehouses, the currency depreciated. In February a ship drew near to New York, bringing the commissioners from Ghent, and the news that the treaty of peace was signed. Men rushed breathless to the city shouting *Peace, peace!* From house to house, from street to street, amid waving torches, all went shouting "*Peace, peace!*" More joyful is the news of peace brought from God by the angels. We, too, should not keep silence, but repeat the news of peace till all the world shall hear.

PRACTICAL.

- (Verses 8, 9.) The brightest visions from God are often revealed to the humblest.
- God reveals himself to us while we are engaged in doing our daily duties.
- (Verse 10.) No news can be so good to man as the news of a Saviour from sin to holiness, from death to everlasting life.
- Salvation is the greater joy to us, because it is for all the world.
- (Verse 13.) Note the interest heaven takes in the salvation of men. How can man be indifferent?
- (Verse 14.) The first thought of the good is to give glory to God.
- Nothing so shows forth the glory of God as his salvation by Jesus Christ.
- Christ brings peace, (1) between God and man; (2) between man and man; (3) between the discordant elements of man's soul.
- God is full of good-will to man. He desires only his good.
- (Verse 16.) God's word always comes true.
- (Verse 17.) They who receive the gospel greatly desire to make it known.
- (Verse 19.) Keep all God's promises where Mary kept hers, — in the heart.
- (Verse 20.) Praising God the natural expression of the Christian's heart.

LESSON II. — JULY 14, 1878.

THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS. — LUKE 2: 40-52.

TIME. A.D. 8, in the spring.

PLACE. Jerusalem and Nazareth.

RULERS. Augustus Cæsar, emperor of Rome; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Perea and Galilee; Coponius, procurator of Judea, subordinate to the prefect of Syria; Judea, including Samaria, having on the banishment of Archelaus, been reduced to an ordinary Roman province.

THE CONNECTION.

Four events only of our Lord's infancy are narrated by the Gospels; namely, the circumcision, the presentation in the temple, the visit of the Magi, and the flight into Egypt. Of these the first two occur only in St. Luke, the last two only in St. Matthew. There were two ceremonies under the law which required that Mary with her husband and child should be present in Jerusalem, and at the temple, within forty days after the birth of the latter. The first was the presentation of the child as the first-born before the Lord in the temple, for which the presence of the father and child was needed; the other was the ceremony of the purification of the mother, for which her presence alone was necessary. The offering made by Mary and Joseph — "two turtle-doves or two young pigeons," it is not stated which — implies narrow circumstances indeed, but not the most abject poverty which some suppose. — *Kitto*.

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled¹ with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

41 ¶ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every² year at the feast of the passover.

¹ ver. 52. Isa. 11: 2, 3. ² Exod. 23: 15. Deut. 16: 1.

EXPLANATORY.

40. And the child grew. His development was a strictly human development. He did not come into the world endowed with infinite knowledge. He was not clothed with infinite power, but experienced the weaknesses and imperfections of human infancy. He grew as other children grow, only in a childhood of stainless and sinless beauty, "as the flower of roses in the spring of the year, and as lilies by the waters." (Compare Eccles. 39: 13, 14.) There is for the most part a deep silence in the evangelists respecting this period; but what eloquence in their silence! May we not find in their very reticence a wisdom and an instruction more profound than if they had filled many volumes with minor details? The boy Christ of the Gospels is simple and sweet, obedient and humble; he is subject to his parents; he is occupied solely with the quiet duties of his home and of his age. Already he knows God as his Father; and the favor of God falls on him softly as the morning sunlight or the dew of heaven, and plays like an invisible aureole round his infantine and saintly brow; unseen save in the beauty of heaven, but yet covered with silver wings, and with its feathers like gold, the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and rested from infancy upon the holy child. — *Farrar*. The child, it is written, grew. Two pregnant facts: he was a child, and a child that grew in heart, in intellect, in size, in grace, in favor with God. Not a man in child's years. No hot-bed precocity marked the holiest of infancies. The Son of man grew up in the quiet valley of existence, in shadow, not in sunshine, not *forced*. Gradually, and not at once, he embraced the sphere of human duties, and woke to his earthly relationships one by one, — the son, the brother, the citizen, the master. — *Robertson*. **Waxed strong in spirit.** Not only the body, but the soul and spirit, of the Lord grew incessantly and regularly. When he was a child he spake as a child, before he could with full consciousness testify of God as his father. — *Van Oosterzee*. **Filled with wisdom.** See verse 52, where it is plain, that having a human mind, as man, he advanced in knowledge and in mental powers. Here it is declared that he was remarkable for wisdom in his childhood. — *Jacobus*. Undoubtedly the awakening of his divine human consciousness, his recognition of himself, formed part of the filling with wisdom. **The grace of God was upon him.** The divine favor rested manifestly and increasingly upon him. — *J. F. and B.*

41. Went to Jerusalem. The law of Moses required that the adult males of the Jewish nation should appear before the Lord at the place of his altar, three times every year, at the great festivals (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles). The attendance of adult males only was required by the law, and even custom did not exact the attendance of females. This, therefore, was entirely a voluntary thing on the part of Mary, and evinces the piety of her character, and her great regard for and delight in the ordinances of God. — *Kitto*. **At the feast of the passover.** The word *feast*, in modern use, does not answer to the idea of the passover. It was not an entertainment lasting for an hour or a day; but was a religious celebration of a most joyful character, extending through a whole week, in commemoration of the Hebrews' departure from the land of Egypt, and the preservation of their first-born on the night when the first-born of Egypt were slain. The name in English, as in Hebrew, expresses the design of the celebration. The Lord *passed over* the houses of the Hebrews, while he permitted death to enter the houses of the Egyptians. See Exod. 12. The word *feast* would be more appropriate. It was celebrated about the time of our April. It is also called *the feast [festival] of unleavened bread* (see Mark 14: 1; Luke 22: 1), because during the whole of the

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

44 But they, supposing him to

have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in

festival the people ate unleavened bread. — *Ripley*. The numbers who flocked to the passover from every region of the East might be counted by tens of thousands. There were far more than the city could by any possibility accommodate; and then, as now at easter-time, vast numbers of the pilgrims reared for themselves the little *succoth*, — booths of mat and wicker-work, and interwoven leaves, which provided them with a sufficient shelter for all their wants. — *Farrar*.

42. When he was twelve years old. The age of twelve years was a critical age for a Jewish boy. It was the age at which, according to Jewish legend, Moses had left the house of Pharaoh's daughter, and Samuel had heard the voice which summoned him to the prophetic office, and Solomon had given the judgment which first revealed his possession of wisdom, and Josiah had first dreamed of his great reform. At this age a boy of whatever rank was obliged, by the injunction of the rabbis and the custom of his nation, to learn a trade for his own support. This period too — the completion of the twelfth year — formed a decisive epoch in a Jewish boy's education. — *Farrar*. At twelve the Jewish child was called the "*son of the law*," and was held subject to its precepts. At this age, therefore, and probably for the first time, Jesus obeys the law to attend the passover. The scenes of this great festival, of which he was himself the predicted subject, and in which he was himself at his crucifixion to perform so sorrowful and so finishing a part, must have opened his mind wonderfully, and have brought his soul to a sublime excitement. — *Whedon*.

43. Fulfilled the days. The days of the passover: eight days in all, — one day for killing the paschal lamb, and seven days for the observance of the feast of unleavened bread. (Exod. 12: 15. Lev. 23: 5, 6.) — *Barnes*. Tarried behind in Jerusalem. Absorbed, in all probability, in the rush of new and elevating emotions. — *Farrar*. Luke neither tells us that Jesus remained behind at Jerusalem intentionally, nor that Joseph and Mary lost sight of him through want of necessary care. — *Van Oosterzee*. Knew not of it. This might very easily happen. When the people were going up to Jerusalem, on occasion of the great festivals, and when they were returning, they went in large companies. The children of such companies would naturally associate together, without being particularly under the eye of their parents; and the older members of a company would also associate together for conversation and mutual assistance. It would be taken for granted that the children were somewhere in the company. But after having travelled as far as they intended to one day, and making a halt for taking refreshment and spending the night, the members of each family would then collect together, and the children would be sought for. — *Ripley*.

44. A day's journey. This is sometimes put for a distance of twenty or thirty miles; but here it means that they travelled a day, according as the caravan might move more or less rapidly. — *Jacobus*.

46. After three days. If we understand with De Wette and others, that these three days were spent in seeking for the child in Jerusalem, it is almost inexplicable that it should only so late have come into their thoughts to go to the temple. It seems more probable that we must allow one day for their departure, one for their return, and the third for their search; and that they found him in the sanctuary at the close of the latter. — *Van Oosterzee*. In the temple. That is, not in the temple itself, to which none but the priests were admitted; nor in the court of the priests, for he was not among the priests, but among the doctors, — that is, the teachers of the law: and therefore in the arcades, or rather in some of the chambers or halls connected with the temple. Sitting in the midst of the doctors. The teachers, the rabbins, who were the instructors of the people in matters of religion. The great sanhedrim of 70 members sat in the room Gazith; 23 judges sat in the gate of the court of Israel, and 23 in the gate of the court of the Gentiles. It was allowed in any of these to propose questions concerning the laws; and a great part of the rabbinical books consist of the answers to such questions. — *Jacobus*. Seated, but doubtless at the feet of his teachers, on the many-colored mosaics which formed the floor, Joseph and Mary found the divine boy. — *Farrar*. It has often been said, that it was the custom of the times for scholars to receive the instructions of the rab

the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding¹ and answers.

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said

unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about² my Father's business?

¹ ch. 4: 22, 32. Ps. 119: 99. Matt. 7: 28. Mark 1: 22. John 7: 15, 46. ² John 5: 17; 9: 4.

bl; standing, as a mark of reverence. This has been, however, well disproved by Vitrings. We have to understand it in the same sense as St. Paul speaks of his *sitting* at the feet of Gamaliel; — *Van Oosterzee*. Both hearing them and asking questions. All that we know of the character of Jesus and the nature of the circumstances shows that the boy was there to inquire and learn, not as the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy represents it, to cross-examine the doctors, "each in turn." He was there, as St. Luke shows us, in all humility and reverence to his elders, as an eager-hearted and gifted learner, whose enthusiasm kindled their admiration, and whose bearing won their esteem and love. All tinge of arrogance and forwardness was utterly alien to his character, which from his sweet childhood upward was meek and lowly of heart. — *Farrar*. As to the questioning, great liberty was allowed to auditors and students in this respect, — the system of instruction being, to a great extent, interrogative; and students being encouraged to propose their doubts and difficulties, and to put any questions which the thirst of knowledge suggested, to those supposed to be able, from their position and attainments, to afford an authoritative solution. It is, however, surely a grievous misrepresentation of this striking scene to call it, and indeed to represent it as the painters do, as "Christ disputing with the doctors." — *Kitto*.

47. All . . . were astonished. The questions of the young Jesus, founded upon what he heard from the doctors, were so acute and profound, that these learned persons were greatly amazed; and in their turn, and in order to test the actual depth of his knowledge, they put deep questions to him. This was an unusual course, and such as shows how strongly the learned and venerable persons composing the assembly were impressed and interested by this extraordinary child. His answers to the designedly trying questions proposed by the doctors afforded them new matter for astonishment. We cannot doubt that all had special reference to the Messiah, and to the real nature of his kingdom and his work, and that much of the amazement of the doctors was excited by views so much at variance with those so commonly entertained. — *Kitto*.

48. They were amazed. Filled with that almost adoring spirit of reverence for the great priests and religious teachers of their day which characterized at this period the simple and pious Galileans, they were awe-struck to find him, calm and happy, in so august a presence. They might, indeed, have known that he was wiser than his teachers, and transcendently more great; but hitherto they had only known him as the silent, sweet, obedient child; and perhaps the incessant contact of daily life had blunted the sense of his awful origin. — *Farrar*. Why hast thou thus dealt with us? It is Mary, not Joseph, who alone ventures to address him in the language of tender reproach. And then follows his answer, so touching in its innocent simplicity, so unfathomable in its depth of consciousness, so infinitely memorable as furnishing us with the *first recorded words* of the Lord Jesus. — *Farrar*.

49. About my Father's business. His celebrated reply to his mother, "Why did ye seek me? Knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" not only reveals his full consciousness of his divine mission, and his zeal to enter upon it at the earliest opportunity; but his use of the word *father* derives a peculiar significance from the remonstrance of Mary, "Behold, thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing." — *Smith*. This is no reproachful question. It is asked in all the simplicity and boldness of holy childhood. — *Alford*. I must be signifies a moral necessity which is identical with perfect freedom. — *Schaff*. This answer — so divinely natural, so sublimely noble — bears upon itself the certain stamp of authenticity. The conflict of thoughts which it implies; the half-veiled astonishment which it expresses, that they should so little understand him; the perfect dignity and yet the perfect humility which it combines, — lie wholly beyond the possibility of invention. In the "Did ye not know," he delicately recalled to them the fading memory of all that they *did* know; and in that "I must" he lays down the sacred law of self-sacrifice by which he was to walk, even unto the death upon the cross. — *Farrar*.

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was sub-

ject unto them: but his mother kept¹ all these sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased² in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

¹ ver. 19. Dan. 7: 28. ² ver. 40. 1 Sam. 2: 26.

50. They understood not. That is, not in their *deeper* sense. Strange and mournful commentary on the first recorded utterance of the youthful Saviour, spoken to those who were nearest and dearest to him on earth! Strange, but mournfully prophetic of all his life. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." — *Farrar*.

51. He went down with them. It is very significant, and not the least of the signs of divinity, that he ruled his spirit, and dwelt at home in un murmuring expectation. This might well be said to be to his childhood what the temptations in the wilderness were to his ministry. The modesty, the filial piety, the perfectness of self-control, contentment in mechanical labor, conscious sovereignty undisclosed, a wealth of nature kept back,—in short, the holding of his whole being in tranquil silence, waiting for growth to produce his ripe self and for God his Father to shake out the seed which was to become the bread of the world,—all this is in itself a wonder of divinity, if men were only wise enough to marvel. — *Beecher*. **Nazareth.** The place lay about six miles north-west from Mount Tabor, and about twenty-five miles from the south end of the Lake of Tiberias, and was within the ancient limits of the tribe of Zebulun. The place is still, as probably then, a large village or small town, situated upon the slope of one of the hills which enclose a hollow, or valley. This vale, which is about a mile long by half a mile broad, resembles a circular basin shut in by mountains. It is a pleasant spot, and one might almost think that the fifteen mountains which enclose it had risen around to guard it from intrusion. It is as a rich and beautiful field in the midst of barren mountains, abounding in fig-trees, and showing many small gardens with hedges of the prickly pear. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament; nor does its name occur in the ancient non-scriptural writings of the Jews, except to mention it as the birthplace of Jesus. Yet it had a sort of notoriety; in fact, it was infamous. What was the character of this ill-repute, we know not precisely. Perhaps it merely showed the sovereign contempt with which the people of Judea and Jerusalem looked down upon all the inhabitants of Galilee, in which district Nazareth was situated. — *Kitto*. Was subject. The words imply a continual habit during his residence at Nazareth, and not a single isolated act. — *Ryle*.

52. Increased in wisdom and stature. Or *age*, as in the margin, which implies the other. If any ask how he who was the eternal wisdom of the Father, who is the only one God, increased in wisdom, they must know that all things in Scripture which are spoken of Christ are not spoken with respect to his entire person, but with respect to the one or other nature united in that person. He increased in wisdom, as he did in age or stature, with respect to his human, not his divine nature. And, as God daily magnified his grace and favor towards him, so he gained him favor with the unrighteous and people of Galilee. — *Poole's Annotations*. The increase of Jesus in wisdom during this period was *real*. Jesus had to learn from the words of others what as yet he knew not; and that was entirely unknown to him as a child, which he had a glimpse of as a boy, conjectured as a youth, and first clearly perceived as a man. — *Van Oosterzee*. We have no record of the next eighteen years of that wondrous life, except what is implied in a single word, Mark 6: 3, "Is not this *the carpenter?*" — *Farrar*. What seasons of tranquil meditation over the lively oracles, and holy fellowship with his Father; what inlettings, on the one hand, of light and love and power from on high, and outgoings of filial supplication, freedom, love, and joy on the other, would these eighteen years contain! And would they not seem "but a few days," if they were so passed, however ardently he might long to be more directly "about his Father's business"? — *J. F. and B.*

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. When he was twelve years old. The old custom in modern times. "A few days ago I attended a very interesting service in a Jewish synagogue. A boy just twelve years old was brought by his father to be admitted as a member of the synagogue; there were present the parents of the boy, his brothers and sisters, his friends, and some few strangers. After several ceremonies had been performed, the priest read a portion of the law in Hebrew; the boy then stepped forward to the desk or platform, near the centre of the building, and read from the roll of parchments, in a clear distinct voice, a short psalm. A pause ensued; and then the old man addressed the boy in a few brief sen-

tenence, telling him that as he had attained to years of discretion, and knew the difference between right and wrong, a great responsibility rested on him; that it was his duty to follow the good, and shun the evil; that it became him to show that the instruction he had received had not been given in vain; that he must diligently practise that which he knew to be right, be obedient to his parents, kind and affectionate to his brothers and sisters, charitable to those who needed his help, and faithful to the religion he had been instructed in. Then, placing his hand on the boy's head, he prayed earnestly that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, would bless the lad, would preserve him from danger and from sin, and make him a wise and good man, if he should be spared to enjoy length of days; or, if his life should be short, that he might be admitted to the presence of God in heaven."—*Biblical Museum*.

II. **Tarried behind . . . have sought thee sorrowing.** "O dear Saviour," cries one of old, "who can miss and not mourn for thee? Just is that sorrow, and those tears seasonable, that are bestowed upon thy loss. What comfort are we capable of while we want thee? What relish is there in these earthly delights without thee? What is there to mitigate our passionate discomforts, if not from thee? Let thyself loose, O my soul, to the fulness of sorrow when thou findest thyself bereaved of him in whose presence there is fulness of joy; and deny to receive comfort from any thing save from his return."—*Bishop Hall*.

III. **About my Father's business.** The Rev. N. Haycroft, in urging earnestness as an essential qualification in a Sunday-school teacher says: The narrative of a colporteur in Spain, on one occasion, will best illustrate this point. He was travelling on foot through the provinces, selling Bibles. At the close of a long and weary day's journey, he approached, hungry and footsore, the outskirts of a village, where he met a Roman-Catholic priest, who asked him what he had in his pack. The colporteur replied, "Bibles and Testaments; and I shall be happy to sell you one."—"Can you sell me a real Bible?"—"Yes; a real Bible for real money." He unshouldered his pack, and the priest purchased a Testament. Just as he was about to depart, he said to the colporteur, "You seem to have travelled far to-day."—"Yes, I have," was the answer; "but it is about my Master's business."—"You are footsore and wayworn."—"Yes; but it is all about my Master's business."—"Your master must have a very faithful servant in you," said the priest. The colporteur, not liking to expatiate on his own merits, was inclined to cut the conversation short, and prepared to pursue his journey. The priest interposed, and pressed him to remain and lodge with him all night. "No," said the colporteur; "I cannot accept your hospitality, for I must be about my Master's business."—"But you must lodge somewhere, so that you may as well come with me." After some persuasion he went. Having spent a useful hour or two together, they retired for the night. The priest was an early riser, and at six o'clock in the morning he called to his house-keeper to know whether the stranger was up yet. "Oh, yes!" said she, "he has been gone from here these three hours; and the last words he said were, 'I must be about my Master's business.'"—*Biblical Treasury*.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 40.) The true characteristics of childhood.
2. (Verse 41.) The duty of attending the services and great gatherings of the church.
3. (Verse 42.) Parents should take their children to these services.
4. (Verses 43, 44.) Parents should take great care to know where their children are, and what they are doing.
5. (Verse 46.) Young people should listen to their elders, and ask questions, so as to learn and grow wise.
6. (Verse 49.) We are to learn what is our Father's business for us, and always be doing it.
7. (Verse 50.) There are many things which we do not understand at first; but by doing them up, like Mary, in our hearts, and waiting and praying, we shall know hereafter what they mean.
8. (Verse 51.) Young people should be subject to their parents. Disobedient children never can increase in wisdom, and in favor with God and man.
9. Jesus worked with his father at the trade of a carpenter. There is no honest employment in doing which we may not grow up to usefulness, and become fit for the service of God.
10. It is a blessed thing for us to know that Jesus was once a child, knows a child's feelings and dangers and temptations, and thus can sympathize with and help children to be filled with wisdom, and to "increase in favor with God and man."

LESSON III.—JULY 21, 1878.

MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.—LUKE 3: 15-22.

TIME. A.D. 28; John 30 years old.

PLACE. That wild range of uncultivated and untenanted wilderness which stretches southward from Jericho and the fords of Jordan to the shores of the Dead Sea. — *Farrar*.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee; Annas and Caiaphas, high priests.

INTRODUCTION.

Of the first 12 years of Christ's life we have only the single incident of the last lesson; and of the next 18 no record except a single word found in Mark 6: 3, "Is not this the carpenter?"—We are apt to forget that it was during this time that much of the great work of the second Adam was done. The growing-up through infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, from grace to grace, holiness to holiness, in subjection, self-denial, and love, *without one polluting touch of sin*,—this it was which, consummated by the three years of active ministry, by the passion, and by the cross, constituted "the obedience of one man," by which many were made righteous. All the time the consciousness of his mission on earth was ripening: "the things heard of the Father" were continually imparted to him; the Spirit, which was not given by measure unto him, was abiding more and more upon him. — *Alford*. Thus, then, his boyhood and youth and early manhood had passed away in humble submission and holy silence, and Jesus was now 30 years old. That deep lesson for all classes of men in every age, which was involved in the long toil and obscurity of those 30 years, had been taught more powerfully than mere words could teach it; and the hour for his ministry and for the great work of his redemption had now arrived. He was to be the Saviour not only by example, but also by revelation and by death. There was a general expectation of that "wrath to come," which was to be the birth-throe of the coming kingdom,—the darkness deepest before the dawn. The world had grown old, and the dotage of its paganism was marked by hideous excesses. Athelism in belief was followed, as among nations it has always been, by degradation of morals. Iniquity seemed to have run its course to the very farthest goal. Philosophy had abrogated its boasted functions except for the favored few. Crime was universal, and there was no known remedy for the horror and ruin which it was causing in a thousand hearts. Even the heathen world felt that "the fulness of the time" had come. — *Farrar*. At this time of general commotion and expectation, the prophetic word of God came to John in the wilderness of Judæa, and he came forward as a preacher. Though he laid no claim to miraculous powers, there was every thing about him to excite attention. A rare and probably solitary specimen of the ancient Nazarites, like Samson and Samuel, commanding admiration by his life of ascetic retirement, he had assumed also the prophet's mantle of camel's-hair, fastened to the body by a girdle, a dress which of itself recalled the person of Elijah. Being, in fact, the greatest, as he was the last prophet, nay, the greatest man of the old covenant, he merged all claims to personal dignity in his one office as the forerunner of Messiah. So intimate was the relation of John's mission to the advent of the Christ, that St. Mark pronounces John's preaching in the wilderness, "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." — *Smith*.

15 And as the people were in | their hearts of John, whether he
expectation, and all men mused in | were the Christ, or not;

EXPLANATORY.

15. Verse 15 is peculiar to Luke, but is equivalent to John 1: 19-25. — *Alford*. In expectation. Waiting for something to occur, that might decide whether John was the Messiah or not. — *Ripley*. Mused. Pondered in silence, wondering. John. John was of the priestly race by both parents, for his father Zacharias was himself a priest of the course of Abia (1 Chron. 24: 10), and Elizabeth was of the daughters of Aaron (Luke 1: 5). The divine mission of John was the subject of prophecy many centuries before his birth, for St. Matthew (3: 3) tells us it was John, who was prefigured by Isaiah (40: 3) and by Malachi (3: 1). His birth—a birth not according to the ordinary laws of nature, but through the miraculous interposition of almighty power—was foretold by an angel sent from God, who assigned to him the name of John (the grace of the Lord), to signify either that he was

16 John answered, saying unto *then* all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes

I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

to be born of God's especial favor, or perhaps that he was to be the harbinger of grace. The angel Gabriel moreover proclaimed the character and office of this wonderful child even before his conception, foretelling that he would be filled with the Holy Ghost from the first moment of his existence, and appear as the great reformer of his countrymen, another Elijah in the boldness with which he would speak truth and rebuke vice; but, above all, as the chosen forerunner and herald of the long-expected Messiah. A single verse contains all that we know of John's history for a space of 30 years,—the whole period which elapsed between his birth and the commencement of his public ministry (Luke 1: 80).—*Ernest Hawkins*. No wonder that such a man at once made himself felt as a power in the midst of his people. It became widely rumored that in the wilderness of Judæa lived one whose burning words it was worth while to hear; one who recalled Isaiah by his expressions, Elijah by his life. And so Pharisee and Sadducee, scribe and soldier, priest and publican, all thronged to listen to his words. And the words of that voice were like a hammer to dash in pieces the flintiest heart, like a flame to pierce into the most hidden thoughts. Without a shadow of euphemism, without an accent of subservience, without a tremor of hesitation, he rebuked the tax-gatherers for their extortionateness; the soldiers for their violence, unfairness, and discontent; the wealthy Sadducees and stately Pharisees, for a formalism and falsity which made them vipers of a viperous brood. The whole people he warned that their cherished privileges were worse than valueless if, without repentance, they regarded them as a protection against the wrath to come. They listened with accusing consciences and stricken hearts; and since he had chosen baptism as his symbol of their penitence and purification, "they were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Even those who did not submit to his baptism were yet "willing for a season to rejoice in his light."—*Farrar*. Whether he were the Christ. Showing both how successful he had been in awakening the expectations of Messiah's immediate appearing, and the high estimation, and even reverence, which his own character commanded.—*J. F. and B.*

16, 17. See Matt. 3: 11, 12; Mark 1: 7, 8; John 1: 26, 27. The four accounts are cognate, but vary in expression and arrangement. Verse 17 is nearly verbatim as Matthew.—*Alford*. John answered. Either to the deputation from Jerusalem (see John 1: 19, &c.), or on some other occasion, simply to remove impressions derogatory to his blessed Master, which he knew to be taking hold of the popular mind.—*J. F. and B.* The moral greatness of John is shown in the fact that he made no use of this delusion of the people, but hastened to withdraw within those limits which they would almost have compelled him to pass. Similar conduct was shown by Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14: 15).—*Lange*. I indeed baptize you with water. The origin of baptism as a religious rite is unknown. It is certainly very ancient. Grotius even imagines that it is as old as the deluge, and was established in commemoration of that event.—*Wilkinson*. What was the baptism which John administered? Not altogether a new rite, for it was the custom of Jews to baptize proselytes to their religion; not an ordinance in itself conveying remission of sins, but rather a token and symbol of that repentance which was an indispensable condition of forgiveness through Him whom John pointed out as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." Still less did the baptism of John impart the grace of regeneration, of a new spiritual life (Acts 19: 3, 4). This was to be the mysterious effect of baptism "with the Holy Ghost." The baptism of John was a visible sign to the people, and a distinct acknowledgment by them, that a hearty renunciation of sin, and a real amendment of life, were necessary for admission into the kingdom of heaven, which the Baptist proclaimed to be at hand. The fundamental distinction between John's baptism and that accompanied by the gift of the Holy Spirit is clearly marked by John himself (Matt. 3: 11, 12).—*Ernest Hawkins*. The latchet of whose shoes. The latchet was the lace or thong with which the sandal was fastened.—*Alford*. As stockings were not worn, the feet would become soiled; and, when persons entered a house, the sandals were taken off and laid aside, so that the feet might be washed. This was the office of the lowest servants. John, then, by saying, *I am not worthy to bear [to carry away] his sandals*, conveyed this idea: "I am not worthy to be the most menial servant to so distinguished a personage as the Messiah."—*Ripley*. With the Holy Ghost. This was literally fulfilled at the day of Pentecost.—*Alford*. The baptism of the Spirit refers to the inward cleansing in faith, the Holy Spirit being conceived of as the regenerating principle (John 3: 1. Acts 1: 5). And with fire. Under the symbol of fire; the fire of divine life and love. "There is," says Jerome, "a threefold baptism of fire: (1) the fire of the Holy Ghost, as at Pentecost; (2)

17 Whose fan¹ is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will² gather the wheat into his garner; but the³ chaff he will burn⁴ with fire unquenchable.

18 And many other things in his

exhortation preached he unto the people.

19 But⁵ Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,

¹ Jer. 15: 7, 19. ² Mic. 4: 12. Matt. 13: 30. ³ Ps. 1: 4. ⁴ Ps. 21: 9. Mark 9: 44, 48. ⁵ Matt. 14: 3. Mark 6: 17.

the fire of earthly trials; and (3) the fire which at the last shall try every man's work, the great trial which is to test all life and character." — *Abbott*.

17. Whose fan is in his hand. Fan; winnowing fan, or shovel, by which the grain mingled with chaff, was exposed to the wind, so that the chaff was blown away. — *Ripley*. In the rabbinical work, *Midrash Tehillim*, on Ps. 2, the same figure is found: "The winnowing is at hand; they throw the straw into the fire, the chaff to the wind, but preserve the wheat in the floor. So the nations of the world shall be as the conflagration of a furnace; but Israel alone shall be preserved." — *Alford*. Here we have another figure of judgment. The fan in his hand, or the instrument for the separating or purging, is the word, or the preaching of the gospel. — *Lange*. His floor; i. e., the contents of the barn-floor. Or perhaps, owing to the verb (*shall cleanse from one end to the other*), the floor itself, which was an open, hard-trodden space in the middle of the field. — *Alford*. Very little use is now made of the fan, but I have seen it employed to purge the floor of the refuse dust which the owner throws away as useless. — *Thomson's Land and Book*. Wheat. True and penitent believers, the precious, pure produce of God's husbandry. The garner. The granary; usually dry, subterranean vaults, — an emblem, first, of the kingdom of heaven on earth; and secondly, of the heavenly inheritance. — *Lange*. Chaff. All that is not wheat, including the straw, which was commonly used in the East for fuel. — *Abbott*. Here it means the whole refuse of God's husbandry; those who will not be converted, and changed into good wheat. Unquenchable fire. There was danger lest, after they had been separated, the chaff should be blown again among the wheat by the changing of the wind. To prevent this, they put fire to it at the windward side, which crept on, and never gave over, till it had consumed all the chaff. In this sense it was unquenchable fire. See Isa. 5: 24. — *Burder*. Fire that will not be put out, but which will make an utter destruction. — *Ripley*. Fire is used here in a different sense than it is in verse 16. There it is a symbol of the purifying, sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost in the heart; here it is used as a symbol of destruction. For the spiritual significance of this passage, compare Matt. 13: 24-30, 36-43, 47-50. It is not only in the future that Christ will sift out the straw from the wheat. His fan is in his hand; the sifting process is going on now; the gospel is measuring men. — *Abbott*.

18. And many other things. Other duties, other ways of enforcing repentance and the kingdom of heaven, the two cardinal points of his preaching. "The two great utterances," it has been said, "which he brings from the desert, contain the two capital revelations to which all the preparation of the gospel has been tending, — law and prophecy, denunciation of sin and promise of pardon." — *Farrar*.

19. But Herod (Antipas). He was the son of Herod the Great, and of Malthace, a Samaritan. He married first the daughter of King Aretas, but afterwards entered into an adulterous connection with his brother Philip's wife. The account here given by Luke should be specially compared with that of Mark (ch. 6: 17-20). Mark tells us that this punishment did not hinder Herod from esteeming John in a certain sense; Luke, that he had not brought it upon himself by reproving this crime alone, but also *all the evils that Herod did*. — *Lange*. The tetrarch. Properly the sovereign or governor of the fourth part of a country. In the later period of the republic, and under the empire, the Romans seem to have used the title (as also those of ethnarch and phylarch), to designate those tributary princes who were not of sufficient importance to be called kings. — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. Herodias. Herodias was a granddaughter of Herod the Great, and was married to her uncle Philip. She was afterwards induced to abandon Philip, and become the wife of his brother Herod Antipas. To prepare the way for this illegal marriage, Herod the tetrarch divorced his former wife, who was a daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia Petraea. Thus there was an unusual complication of guilt in this transaction. — *Ripley*. Philip. The Philip here mentioned was not the tetrarch of Ithuria, mentioned by Luke (3: 1), but another person, an obscure son of Herod the Great, who was in private life, having been disinherited by his father. He is also named Herod by Josephus. — *Ripley*.

20 Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

21 Now when all the people were baptized, it¹ came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

¹ Matt. 3: 13, &c.

20. Shut up John in prison. Compare Matt. 14: 3-5. This prison, as we learn from Josephus, was in the fortified citadel of Macherus, east of the Dead Sea. Its ruins still exist. — *Abbott*. The whole of Luke's account of John is summary and written without regard to chronology; he here collects all that he has to say concerning the forerunner, that he may confine himself for the future to the history of Jesus alone; the narrative of the baptism forming the point of transition. — *Lange*.

21. Jesus also being baptized. Compare Matt. 3: 13-17; Mark 1: 9-11; John 1: 28-34. It does not appear exactly when the baptism of our Lord took place. If the comparative age of the Baptist is taken into account, we should suppose it to have been about six months after this latter began his ministry; but this is no sure guide. The place was Bethabara, or *Bethany* (the older reading), beyond Jordan (John 1: 28). Why should our Lord, who was without sin, have come to a baptism of repentance? Because he was made sin for us. There is no more strangeness in his having been baptized by John, than in his keeping the passovers. The one rite, as the other, belonged to sinners; and among the transgressors he was numbered. I cannot suppose the baptism to have been sought by our Lord merely to honor John, or as knowing that it would be the occasion of a divine recognition of his Messiahship, and thus pre-ordained by God; but *bona fide*, as bearing the infirmities and carrying the sorrows of mankind, and thus beginning here the triple baptism of water, fire, and blood, two parts of which were now accomplished, and of the third of which he himself speaks (Luke 12: 50), and the beloved apostle (1 John 5: 8). — *Alford*. It was a public renunciation of sin, and a public profession of religion. He fittingly commenced his public life by a public renunciation of sin for himself and his followers. The true follower of Christ must follow him in this public renunciation of sin, and profession of religion. It is not true, as sometimes said, that Christ professed religion only by his life. — *Abbott*. **And praying.** It is full of instruction to us, that Jesus prayed. He would keep up intimate communion with his Father. If Jesus prayed, how much more do we need to live a life of prayer! **The heaven was opened**; torn or rent; an apparent separation or division of the visible expanse, as if to afford passage to the form and voice which are mentioned in the next clause. Compare similar expressions (Isa. 64: 1. Ezek. 1: 1. John 1: 52. Acts 7: 56). In all these cases the essential idea suggested by the version is that of renewed communication and extraordinary gifts from heaven to earth. — *Alexander*.

22. Descended in a bodily shape like a dove. The appearance and voice seem to have been manifested to our Lord and the Baptist only. They may have been *alone* at the time; or not, we have an instance in Acts 9: 7, of such an appearance being confined to one person, while the others present were unconscious of it. The Holy Spirit descended not only in the *manner* of a dove, but in *bodily shape*, which I cannot understand in any but the literal sense, as the *be shape of a dove*, seen by the Baptist. — *Alford*. The dove was historically connected in the Jewish mind with the abatement of the waters after the flood, and has become, as well as the olive-branch, a symbol of peace among all Christian people; and it is referred to by Christ as a symbol of harmlessness and gentleness. It was thus a fitting emblematic form for the Holy Spirit to take on in giving a divine indorsement to Him who is a sacrifice for all, whose coming brings life to the world and the assurance of the peace of God to the soul which accepts him, and who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. — *Abbott*. **And a voice came from heaven.** As true a voice, with as true an articulation, as ever came from human or superhuman organs of utterance. It was no dream or conception of John's, but a reality to his perception. — *Whedon*. **Thou art my beloved Son.** Christians are called "sons of God" (1 John 3: 2); but nowhere is the term "beloved son" applied by God to any one but Jesus Christ, to whom it is given both here and in the hour of His transfiguration (Matt. 17: 5). — *Abbott*. These solemn words are a divine declaration that our Lord Jesus Christ is the promised Redeemer whom God from the beginning undertook to send into the world, and that with His incarnation, sacrifice, and substitution for man, God the Father is satisfied and well pleased. — *Ryle*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. The latchet of whose shoes, &c. (verse 16). The custom of loosing the sandals from off the feet of an Eastern worshipper was ancient and indispensable. It is also commonly observed

in visits to great men. The sandals, or slippers, are pulled off at the door, and either left there, or given to a servant to bear. This was the work of servants among the Jews; and it was reckoned so servile, that it was thought too mean for a scholar or disciple to do. The Jews say: "All services which a servant does for a master, a disciple does for his master, except unloosing his shoes." John thought it was too great an honor for him to do that for Christ, which was thought too mean for a disciple to do for a wise man. — *Burdier*.

II. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Suppose we saw an army sitting down before a granite fort, and they told us that they intended to batter it down: we might ask them, "How?" They point to a cannon-ball. "Well, but there is no power in that: it is heavy, but no more than half a hundred or perhaps a hundred weight. If all the men in the army hurled it against the fort, they would make no impression." They say, "No, but look at the cannon." — "Well, but there is no power in that; a child may ride upon it, a bird may perch in its mouth: it is a machine, and nothing more." — "But look at the powder." — "Well, there is no power in that: a child may spill it, a sparrow may peck it." Yet this powerless powder and powerless ball are put in the powerless cannon; one spark of fire enters it; and then, in the twinkling of an eye, that powder is a flash of lightning, and that cannon-ball is a thunderbolt which smites as if it had been sent from heaven. So it is with our church machinery of this day: we have all the instruments necessary for pulling down strongholds, and oh for the baptism of fire! — *Rev. W. Arthur*.

III. Descended like a dove upon him. As oftentimes, when walking in a wood near sunset, though the sun himself be hid by the height and bushiness of the trees around, yet we know that he is still above the horizon, from seeing his beams in the open glades before us, illumining a thousand leaves, the several brightnesses of which are so many evidences of his presence; thus it is with the Holy Spirit: he works in secret, but his work is manifest in the lives of all true Christians. Lamps so heavenly must have been lit from on high. — *Julius Charles Hare*.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 15.) Christ is the desire of all nations.
2. In all our experience there is a John the Baptist before the coming of Christ, the law before the gospel, repentance before faith.
3. (Verse 16.) The more holy a man is, the more truly humble.
4. The greatest work of man is to point men to Christ.
5. The teacher should always hide behind the cross, and draw his pupils to his Master.
6. The Holy Spirit, like fire, burns up the evil of the heart in purifying flames.
7. (Verse 17.) What our future is depends on what we are, whether wheat or chaff.
8. (Verse 19.) We should be faithful in reproving, cost what it may.
9. In confessing Christ, and communion with God in prayer, heaven is opened to us.
10. If Christ needed a public profession of religion and prayer, how much more do we!
11. The Holy Spirit we receive gives us the gentleness and innocence of the dove.
12. If we are faithful, a voice from heaven will at last say to us, "Well done," &c.

LESSON IV. — JULY 28, 1878.

JESUS AT NAZARETH. — LUKE 4: 16-30.

TIME. A.D. 28. A year or more after the last lesson.

PLACE. Nazareth in Galilee.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome, xvth year; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

THE CONNECTION.

After his baptism "Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. 4: 1-11. Mark 1: 12, 13. Luke 4: 1-13). An interval of a year or more occurs between the temptation and the incident of the lesson. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are silent in regard to it; and it is to John, as Farrar says, that "we owe the beautiful narrative of the days which immediately ensued upon the temptation." The following order of events, as given in Lange, is that followed by most of the authorities: the first friends (John 1: 35-52); the first miracle (John 2: 1-12); the first passover (John 2: 13-22); Jesus and Nicodemus (John 2: 23, to 3: 21); the Messiah in Samaria (John 4: 1-43), the second miracle in Cana (John 4: 43-54); the first sermon in Nazareth (Luke 4: 16-30). Alford places this sermon later.

16 And he came to Nazareth,¹ where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he² went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

17 And there was delivered unto

him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written.

18 The³ Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed

¹ Matt. 2: 23. ² Matt. 13: 54. John 18: 20. Acts 13: 14; 17: 2. ³ Isa. 61: 1.

EXPLANATORY.

16. And he came to Nazareth. The visit to Nazareth recorded in Matt. 13: 54-58 (and Mark 6: 1-6), we take to be not a later visit, but the same with this first one; because we cannot think that the Nazarenes, after being so enraged at his first display of wisdom as to attempt his destruction, should, on a second display of the same, wonder at it, and ask how he came by it, as if they had never witnessed it before. — *J. F. and B. Nazareth.* See Lesson II., 3d quarter, on verse 51. And, as his custom was. "As his custom was," refers to the whole of what he did: it is not merely that he had been in the habit of attending the synagogues, but of teaching in them: see verse 15. It was apparently the first time he had ever so taught in the synagogue at Nazareth. — *Alford.* Into the synagogue. Synagogues were Jewish houses of worship. The temple was in Jerusalem; but, for the convenience of the people, smaller houses were erected for worship in various places. — *Ripley.* There was but one synagogue in the little town; and probably it resembled in all respects, except in its humbler aspect and materials, the synagogues of which we see the ruins at Tell Hâm and Irbid. It was simply a rectangular hall, with a pillared portico of Grecian architecture, of which the farther extremity (where the "sanctuary" was placed) usually pointed towards Jerusalem, which, since the time of Solomon, had always been the *kiblah* — i.e., the consecrated direction — of a Jew's worship, as Mecca is of a Mohammedan's. In wealthier places it was built of white marble, and sculptured on the outside in alto-relievo, with rude ornaments of vine-leaves and grapes, or the budding rod and the pot of manna. On entering there were seats on one side for the men; on the other, behind a lattice, were seated the women, shrouded in their long veils. At one end was the *tebhah*, or ark of painted wood, which contained the sacred scriptures; and at one side was the *dimas*, or elevated seat for the reader or preacher. Clergy, properly speaking, there were none, but in the chief seats were the ten or more *battanim*, "men of leisure," or leading elders; and pre-eminent among these the chief of the synagogue, or *rôsh hak-kenêseth*. Inferior in rank to these were the *chazzam*, or clerk, whose duty it was to keep the sacred books; the *sheltach*, corresponding to our sacristan or vergier; and the *paracalm*, or shepherds, who in some respects acted as deacons. — *Farrar.* The service of the synagogue commenced with praise and prayer; then a portion of the law was read aloud, and after this a portion of the prophets. The reader and congregation, out of respect to God's word, stood while it was read; they sat while the subsequent discourse was delivered. — *Whedon.* As there were no ordained ministers to conduct the services, for the office of priests and Levites at Jerusalem was wholly different, — these lessons might not only be read by any competent person who received permission from the *rôsh hak-kenêseth*, but he was even at liberty to add his own *midrash*, or comment. — *Farrar.* Stood up for to read. The Saviour's rising served as a token that he also wished to make use of this liberty. The public reading of the law had already taken place, and that of the prophets was about to begin. He therefore receives from the hand of the attendant the roll out of which on that day according to the customary sequence, the lesson was to be read. It was that of Isaiah; and, after he had unrolled this holy book, he finds certainly without seeking, yet not without special higher guidance, the prophetic passage referred to. — *Van Oosterzee.*

17. The book. See Acts 13: 15. The ancient books were not leaves bound together as ours, but large skins or linen (or papyrus, whence our word *paper*) which were rolled up, and kept in a case. Hence, our word *volume* means a roll. — *Jacobus.* Esaias. The Greek form of Isaiah, and it should have been translated Isaias. He prophesied more than 700 years before this. When he had opened. Literally, unrolled. These scrolls were rolled on a roller like a map, and if they were long they were on two rollers, rolled up from each end of the scroll to meet in the middle. They could be held, one in each hand, and unrolled as far as one pleased either way, and then held at the place and read. They were bound with a string and easily sealed. — *Jacobus.*

18. The Spirit of the Lord. See Isa. 61: 1, 2. The length of the *hapterah* or passage read might be from three to twenty-one verses; but Jesus only read the first and part of the second, stopping short in a spirit of tenderness, before the stern expression, "The day of vengeance of our God," so that the gracious words, "The acceptable year of the Lord," might rest last upon their

me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted,¹ to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering² of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,³

19 To preach the acceptable year⁴ of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and

he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious⁵ words

¹ 2 Chron. 34: 27. Ps. 34: 18; 51: 17; 147: 3. Isa. 57: 15. ² Ps. 146: 8. Isa. 29: 18. ³ Isa. 42: 3. Matt. 12: 20. ⁴ Isa. 61: 2; 63: 4. ⁵ ch. 2: 47. Ps. 45: 2. Isa. 50: 4. Matt. 13: 54. Mark 6: 2.

ears, and form the text of his discourse. — *Farrar*. The meaning of this prophetic citation may be better seen, when we remember that it stands in the middle of the third great division of the book of Isaiah (chs. 49-66), that, viz., which comprises the prophecies of the person, office, sufferings, triumph, and church of the Messiah; and thus by implication announces the fulfilment of all that went before in him who then addressed them. — *Alford*. The phrase, "The Spirit of the Lord, or the Spirit of Jehovah, is upon me," refers to the fact that he had been publicly consecrated to his work by the Holy Spirit descending on him at his baptism, and that the Spirit of God had been imparted to him "without measure" to endow him for his great office. — *Barnes*. Hath anointed me. By the ceremony of anointing, priests, kings, and prophets were designated to their office. See Exod. 28: 41; 40: 15; 1 Kings 19: 16; 1 Sam. 10: 1. Hence the term *anoint* might be used metaphorically to express the circumstance of having been *divinely appointed*, either to an office in general, or to a particular duty connected with that office. — *Ripley*. To preach the gospel. The meaning of "gospel" is "good tidings." The corresponding language in Isaiah is, "preach [proclaim] good tidings." Our Lord intended to convey the thought that the time so long expected had now arrived, — the time for announcing that the Messiah had come. — *Ripley*. To the poor. In scriptural language "the poor" represent all who are destitute of good necessary to their perfection and happiness, especially those who feel their want and are disconsolate. — *Dr. John M. Mason*. To preach. Better here, *to proclaim*. — *Alford*. Deliverance to the captives. This is a figure originally applicable to those in captivity in Babylon. The gospel does not *literally* open the doors of prisons, but it releases the *mind*, captive under sin; it gives comfort to the prisoner; and it will finally open all prison doors, and break off all the chains of slavery, and, by preventing *crime*, prevent also the sufferings that are the consequence of crime. — *Barnes*. To set at liberty them that are bruised. The clause, *to set at liberty them that are bruised*, is from Isa. 58: 6, and was probably made by our Lord a part of his text for preaching. The beautiful passages combined show that the jubilee, when the bondmen of Israel were to be emancipated, was held by him to be a type of the gospel dispensation. Freedom is the spirit of the gospel; emancipation from the bonds of slavery on the limbs, of ignorance on the mind, of sin upon the soul. — *Whedon*.

19. The acceptable year of the Lord. This is the gospel time, called in 2 Cor. 6: 2, "The accepted time." The allusion is to the year of jubilee, when liberty was proclaimed to all in the land (Lev. 25: 8, 10). It was every fiftieth year. It was a time of forgiving debts, and of redeeming forfeited estates. This gospel jubilee had come. — *Jacobus*.

20. He closed the book. He rolled it up. The minister. The keeper of the sacred books. Sat down. This did not mean that he had nothing to say, but it showed the contrary; for the custom in the synagogue was to stand in reading the Scripture, and to sit down for explanation of it. This led them to fix their eyes on him in eager expectation. He was to preach now from a text. — *Jacobus*. Eyes were fastened on him. They were too interested not to look intently, and no slight interruption would turn away eyes so fastened by interest and desire. All hearers should so look at the preacher. They hear better, and he preaches better.

21. He began to say. Implying that the following words are merely the substance of a more expanded discourse which our Lord uttered to that effect. — *Alford*. Fulfilled in your ears; viz., by my proclaiming it and my course of ministry. — *Alford*.

22. Bare him witness; i.e. bore witness to him (that it was so). — *Alford*. They admired not only *what*, but the way *in which*, the Saviour spoke, especially when they remembered his humble origin, which would have given occasion to no such expectation. This passage, as well as John 7: 46, is noteworthy, since it gives an unimpeachable evidence of the irresistible impression which the graciousness of the manner of Jesus in his discourse and preaching produced even in the case of

which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is¹ not this Joseph's son?

23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum,² do also here in thy country.

24 And he said, Verily I say unto

you, No³ prophet is accepted in his own country.

25 But I tell you of a truth, many⁴ widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up⁵ three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

26 But unto none of them was

¹ John 6: 42. ² Matt. 4: 13; 11: 23, &c. ³ Matt. 13: 57. John 4: 44. ⁴ 1 Kings 17: 9. ⁵ Jas. 5: 17.

imperfectly developed or hostilely disposed persons. — *Van Oosterzee*. Gracious words. Words of grace. For as the text is full of words of grace and mercy to those who needed them, so was the sermon. Hence even these rude Nazarene highlanders *bare witness*, — that is, fully felt and acknowledged the blessed power with which that grace was proclaimed. But though *grace* be the theme, and Jesus be the preacher, there is a power in a wicked human will and perverse human passions that can defeat all the appliances that God, within the laws of his wise government, can bring to bear upon them. In the very pathos of the blessed orator in this synagogue, there was a point in which they could find offence. The very *grace* and *mercy* assumed that it was *they* who needed it, and *he* who was to bestow it. Their rude pride could not brook two such haughty and humbling assumptions from this carpenter's son to them. — *Whedon*.

23. *Heal thyself*. *Exert thy powers of healing in thine own country*, as presently interpreted; the physician being represented as an inhabitant of Nazareth, and *thyself* including his own citizens in it. Stier remarks that the reproach was repeated under the cross, *then* with a strictly individual application. — *Alford*. This was the common proverb, that one who pretended to heal others should not leave himself unhealed. The application is immediately explained: Do for your own Nazareth what you have done for Capernaum, and so prove yourself the very Messiah to us. He had just before healed the nobleman's son at Capernaum (John 4: 46-54). — *Jacobus*. Capernaum was situated on the north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was a flourishing city in Christ's day.

24. *No prophet*. Proverbs are of course general rules, to be taken with exceptions. The present *proverb* is founded on one of the evil propensities of our nature; namely, the envy which arises from our seeing former equals outstrip us in life. This is a special characteristic of coarser natures, like the men of Nazareth. — *Whedon*.

25. *But I tell you, &c.* He proceeded still further to vindicate himself for not complying with their demand, by observing that his declining to show them special attention was in harmony with some instances of God's dealings in ancient times with their nation. The Jews of old, regarding the Lord's prophets as peculiarly theirs, and themselves as peculiarly his people, might have thought, that, especially in seasons of distress, it would be *they* who would be particularly favored, rather than persons not belonging to the chosen people; and that those who lived beyond the boundaries of the sacred territory would not be preferred to themselves in the distribution of divine bounties. Yet, on two memorable occasions, related in their sacred books, it was Gentiles, not Jews, who were distinguished by the favor of God; it was Gentiles, not Jews, to whom miraculous power was manifested, and for whom the actions of a prophet were performed. Just so in the case of the people of Nazareth. However they might think, that, from the peculiar connection of Jesus with their town, they had a special claim, Jesus judged differently, and chose to go abroad, beyond their limits, in the exercise of his miraculous powers. The Saviour's language conveyed also an implication that the inhabitants of Nazareth were badly disposed towards him, and that the exertion of his miraculous power among them would be of little avail. — *Ripley*. To show them most clearly that he was something more than they, — that he was no mere Nazarene like any other who might have lived among them for thirty years, — and that he belonged not to them but to the world, he reminds them that miracles are not to be limited by geographical relationships; that Elijah had only saved the Phenician widow of Sarepta, and Elisha only healed the hostile leper of Syria. — *Farrar*. *Elias*. Elias is the Greek form of the Old Testament name Elijah. *Three years and six months*. So also in Jas. 5: 17. In 1 Kings 18: 1, it is called but three years, because it was three years from the time Elijah foretold the drought; but there had already, in the natural course of the seasons, been six months without rain, so that the heaven was shut up 3½ years.

26. *Sarepta*. On the coast of the Mediterranean, near Sidon, 1½ hours from Adlan, is a solitary woly, dedicated to El Khudr (the Arab name of St. George), and an old khan beside it. A few hundred

Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman *that was* a widow.

27 And¹ many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

28 And all they in the synagogue,

when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down² headlong.

30 But he³ passing through the midst of them went his way.

¹ 2 Kings 5: 14. ² Pa. 37: 14, 32, 33. ³ John 8: 59; 10: 39.

yards north of it are the ruins of a small town; and high up on the side of a projecting hill, $\frac{1}{4}$ hour to the right, is the village of Surafend. Here on the shore was situated the ancient town of Zarephath. Sarepta afterwards became famous for its wine, which is highly praised by both Latin and Greek authors. During the rule of the crusading kings it was honored by being made the seat of a Latin bishopric; and a little chapel was erected on the site of the widow's house where Elijah lived. In the 13th century it was in ruins, and almost deserted. Its inhabitants, escaping from the insecurity of the plain, ascended the mountain-side, built new houses, and gave to them their old name in the Arabic form, Surafend. — *Porter*.

27. *Eliseus*. Greek form for *Elisha*. (See 2 Kings 5: 14.) Stier remarks that these two examples have a close parallelism with those of the Syro-Phœnician woman (Mark 7: 26), and the ruler's son at Capernaum (John 4: 46). Naaman the Syrian, 2 Kings 5: 1-14.

28. *Were filled with wrath*. *What* then! were they in *his* estimation (and he but the "carpenter!") no better than Gentiles and lepers? This was the climax of all that was intolerable to them, as coming from a fellow-townsmen whom they wished to rank among themselves; and at these words their long-suppressed fury burst into a flame. The speaker was no longer interrupted by a murmur of disapprobation, but by a roar of wrath. — *Farrar*.

29. *The brow of the hill*. One who visits Nazareth at this day will see how remarkably it answers to this description. It is built on precipitous slopes, and in several places we noticed rocky steps of forty to fifty feet. These were chiefly on the outer edge of the city, and would answer to this narrative. A Maronite church stands on one of these spots. This kind of punishment was sometimes inflicted by law among the Romans. — *Jacobus*.

30. *Passing through the midst of them*. Of course the mob was ahead of him. But, at the moment in which he chose to escape, wonderful was the ease with which he passed through the crowd, who seem to have parted right and left, as if they meant to escort rather than to murder him. The question is raised, whether this critical escape and other similar instances were miraculous (John 8: 59; 18: 6). — *Whedon*. Alford thinks that it was miraculous; Stier and Lange, that it was not. And so he left them, never apparently to return again; never, if we are right in the view here taken, to preach again in their little synagogue. Did he cast one longing, lingering glance at the humble home in which for so many years he had toiled as the village carpenter? Did no companion of his innocent boyhood, no friend of his sinless youth, accompany him with awe and pity and regret? Such questions are not surely unnatural, not surely irreverent; but they are not answered. Of all merely human emotions of his heart, except so far as they directly affect his mission upon earth, the Gospels are silent. We know only that henceforth other friends awaited him away from boorish Nazareth, among the gentle and noble-hearted fishermen of Bethsaida; and that thenceforth his home, so far as he had a home, was in the little city of Capernaum, beside the sunlit waters of the Galilean lake. — *Farrar*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor*. The biographer of Mr. Eliot, the missionary, says of him: "He liked no preaching but what had been well studied; and he would very much commend a sermon which he could perceive had required some good thinking and reading in the author of it. I have heard him thus express himself: 'Brother, there was oil required for the service of the sanctuary, but it was to be beaten oil. I praise God I saw your oil so well beaten to-day. The Lord help us always, by good study, to beat our oil, that there may be no knots in our sermons left undissolved, and that there may be a clear light thereby given to the house of God!' He likewise looked for something in a sermon beside and beyond the mere study of man; he was for having the Spirit of God breathing in it and with it; and he was for speaking those things from those impressions, and with those affections,

which might compel the hearer to say, 'The Spirit of God is here!' I have heard him complain, 'It is a sad thing, when a sermon shall have this one thing, the Spirit of God, wanting in it.' — *Anecdotes on the New Testament.*

II. No prophet is accepted in his own country. The proverb says truly that no man is a hero to his own servant. Not because he is not really a hero, but because heroism is an invisible spirit; and, when its symbols and pageantries are laid aside, it seems as if heroism were laid aside with them. When a hero or a saint is seen to eat and drink, live and dress, like an ordinary man, weak where some are strong, ignorant of some things that others know, it is almost impossible to look through these things and recognize the hero or saint. So even Cassius spoke of the immortal Caesar, and misunderstood where his greatness lay (*Julius Caesar*, Act 1, Scene 2). Were Socrates to walk our streets as he walked those of Athens, with "his thick lips, snub nose, corpulent body, and personal ugliness," scolded by his wife at home, and walking in mean dress and bare feet in the public streets and workshops, "careless where or when or with whom he talked," how many of us would have recognized under this Therites' mask the features of a god, or have imagined that this man among the millions of his age would march down the centuries the foremost man of all? No man in a cloud ever comprehended the cloud. Put it far away in the sunset sky, then you can see the cloud. Stand close against a mountain: you see stones and bushes and trees and soil and rocks, but you cannot see the mountain. Stand off, off in the distance; there alone can you see the mountain. We are apt to think, if we had lived with Jesus in his earthly life, and heard his gracious words and seen his miracles of love, we should not have failed to recognize him as his townsmen did. But we have altogether the advantage over them. With Jesus not on the cross, but the Lamb in the midst of the throne; not in common raiment, but "with his hair, as white as snow, and his eyes a flame of fire, and his voice as the sound of many waters;" and on his vesture written, "King of kings and Lord of lords," — it is much easier for us to trust him as our divine Saviour, to be loyal to him as our King, and proclaim him as the Redeemer of the world.

III. Passing through the midst of them. The following incident is given in "Stevens's History of Methodism." Wesley, assailed by a Cornish mob, is nearly thrown to the ground, whence he would never have risen alive. Struck with a blow upon the chest, so that the blood gushes out of his mouth, he yet maintains a composure superior to pain, and perfect as if in the quiet of his study. Amid his utterance of prayer and their clamors for his life, a strange and sudden reaction takes place. A call is made for a fair hearing; and the very leader of the mob, awe-struck, becomes all at once his defender. And then, in language strongly reminding us (though it did not the historian himself) of the present scene, it is added, "The people fall back, as if by common consent; and, led on through their open ranks by the champion of the rabble, he safely escaped to his lodgings." — *Whedon.*

PRACTICAL.

1. The good custom of attending church and studying God's word should be kept everywhere; on travels, or when visiting, as well as at home.
2. The Old Testament Scriptures ever point to Christ. Without them we could not well understand his nature and his mission.
3. Those whom God appoints for any service should be anointed for it by the Holy Spirit.
4. They are poor, whatever else they may possess, who have needs unsatisfied, sorrows uncomforted, sins unforgiven.
5. Christ is the Good Physician. There is no disease he cannot heal, no sin he cannot remove, no trouble he cannot help.
6. Christ is most to those who need him most. Our sins and wants, instead of keeping us from him, should make us feel that we are the ones he came to help.
7. The gospel is for the poor. It gives freedom and light and comfort.
8. The way to hear the gospel, intent listening with eyes and ears.
9. Many esteem highly that which is far-fetched and dear bought, though that which is home-made and near at hand is better.
10. The goodness of God is not narrow and limited, but shines upon all.
11. So long as the gospel is preached with sweet words, even the godless will put up with it; but, as soon as the application is made, the best appearing are ready to burst with anger. — *Zecisius.*
12. The power of prejudice.
13. The fickleness of popular favor; one moment admiring, the next filled with wrath.
14. Jesus never went there again to preach, so far as we know. How sad so to treat the gospel that it is offered to us for the last time!

LESSON V.—AUGUST 4, 1878.

THE DRAUGHT OF FISHES.—LUKE 5: 1-11.

TIME. A. D. 28.**PLACE.** Capernaum and Sea of Galilee.**RULERS.** Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.**INTRODUCTION.**

On quitting Nazareth, Jesus proceeded to Capernaum, which henceforth became his headquarters. This was then one of the most important towns upon the western borders of the Lake of Tiberias. If its site has been correctly identified at the now forsaken spot called Tell Hum, towards the northern border of the lake, there are remains of splendid public buildings to attest its ancient consequence. The site is also delightful, commanding a fine view of the lake, and of the steep and high mountains around. In all respects it furnished a place of abode admirably suited to his purposes, both from the facility of communication, as well by land as by the lake, with many considerable and flourishing towns, and of escape into a more secure region in case of any threatened persecution. His disciples were fishermen upon this lake. — *Kitto*. There is a difference of opinion among commentators in regard to the order of events after Jesus left Nazareth; some following that given by Luke, and making the healing of the demoniac in the synagogue, and of Peter's wife's mother, precede that of the miraculous draught of fishes; but the larger number following the order given by Mark, who makes the incident of the lesson to precede the other events. Three accounts (Matt. 4: 18-22; Mark 1: 16-20, with the one of the lesson) all evidently relate to the same transaction. The remark of Spanheim is here just. The facts narrated by Luke are not contradicted by Matthew, but only passed over. Nothing is more common than that circumstances omitted by one should be supplied by another, lest the sacred writers should seem to have written by compact. — *Robinson's Harmony*.

1 And¹ it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

¹ Matt. 4: 18, &c. Mark 1: 16, &c.

EXPLANATORY.

1. **As the people pressed upon him.** We should observe in this passage, *our Lord Jesus Christ's unwearied readiness for every good work*. Once more we find him preaching to a people who "pressed upon him to hear the word of God." Souls were waiting to be fed. Personal inconvenience was allowed no place in his consideration. God's work must not stand still. — *Ryle*. **Lake Gennesaret.** Our Saviour's chief resort was now the margin of that beautiful lake which is variously called the Sea of Galilee, of Tiberias, and of Gennesaret. The Sea of Galilee is of an oval shape, about 13 geographical miles long, and six broad. The River Jordan enters it at its northern end, and passes out at its southern end. In fact, the bed of the lake is just a lower section of the great Jordan valley. Its most remarkable feature is its deep depression, its surface being no less than 700 feet below the level of the ocean. Like almost all lakes of volcanic origin, it occupies the bottom of a great basin, the sides of which shelve down with a uniform slope from the surrounding plateau. — *Smith*.

2. **Two ships.** The ships used on so small a lake were probably no more than fishing-boats, probably without decks, and easily drawn up on the beach. Josephus says there were 230 of them on the lake, attended by four or five men each. — *Barnes*. **Standing by the lake.** Anchored by the lake, or drawn up upon the beach. **Fishermen.** This is not to be exaggerated as a proof of abject poverty and social degradation, because fishermen in some countries, or in some states of society, hold such a position, or because an old Greek proverb makes a fisher's life the type of hardship and of destitution. In the part of Galilee adjacent to the lake this was probably a common

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch¹ out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled

¹ John 21: 6.

and a profitable business, as it is now on the Banks of Newfoundland and coasts of New England. The first apostles seem to have been chosen out of this class, not as the lowest and the most illiterate in order to enhance the proof of a divine authority attending the religion which they propagated, nor as the hardest and most accustomed to exposure, fitting them for what they were to suffer in their Master's service; but as representing the body of the people in that part of Palestine, and no doubt possessing at least an average amount of natural intelligence, and such religious training as was common to the whole population, even of Galilee, who, although treated with contempt by the people of Judæa, frequented the same feasts (John 4: 45), and attended the same spiritual worship in their synagogues, and received the same instruction from their scribes in every town of Galilee (Luke 5: 17). — *Alexander*. **Washing their nets.** Indicating that their labor for that time was finished. See verse 5. At the present day no fishermen cast their nets, and no boats cut the waves of Genesaret. — *Whedon*. Simon and his companions, impelled by the necessities of a lot which they seem to have borne with noble-minded cheerfulness, had been engaged in fishing; and, having been wholly unsuccessful, two of them, seated on the shore, — probably, in that clear, still atmosphere, within hearing of His voice, — were occupying their time in washing; and two, seated in their boat with their hired servants, and Zebedee their father, were mending their nets. — *Farrar*.

3. **Simon's.** Simon, having descried the approaching Jesus, with the multitude upon his heels, forthwith returns to his boat. Ever since his first blessed interview with Jesus on the banks of the Jordan, where he had been crowned with his new name by Jesus (as narrated in John 1: 35-42), he had no doubt retained his faith in and love for the blessed Redeemer. Residing in two contiguous villages by the lake-side, Peter had of course attended the teaching and preaching of Jesus. Hence, on the present occasion, Jesus takes familiar possession of his boat, requests its removal, and makes it his pulpit. But there is nothing to indicate that Peter was called at that first interview to the apostolate. — *Whedon*. Simon, afterwards called Peter, was a native of Bethsaida in Galilee, and was the son of a certain Jonas, or John. It is probable, before he became known to Christ, he was a disciple of John the Baptist. He seems to have been a man of undoubted piety, of ardent attachment to his Master, but, at the same time, with a mind rather quick than accurate in its apprehensions, and with feelings rather hasty in their impulse than determined and continuous in their exercise. His fall and subsequent restoration produced a powerful change for the better upon the apostle's mind. Tradition says that he suffered martyrdom by crucifixion, but was at his own request crucified with his head down. — *Kitte*.

4. **Launch out.** This is in the original, singular, as addressed to Peter alone, who was the steersman of his ship: *let down* is plural, as addressed to the fishermen in the ship collectively. — *Alford*. As the first command had put the obedience of Peter to a slight test, so here his faith is exercised by an apparently arbitrary demand of the Saviour. Without doubt, after a night of unsuccessful toil, this injunction to take up his work again in full day must have appeared singular to him; but he already knows enough of the Lord to bring his fisherman's theory as a sacrifice to his faith in Jesus' word alone. — *Van Oosterzee*. **For a draught.** Seated in this pleasant pulpit, safe from the inconvenient contact with the multitude, he taught them from the little boat as it rocked on the blue ripples, sparkling in the morning sun. And, when his sermon was over, he thought not of himself and of his own fatigue, but of his poor and disappointed disciples. He knew that they had toiled in vain; he had observed that even while he spoke they had been preparing for some future and more prosperous expedition; and, with a sympathy which never omitted an act of kindness, he ordered Peter to push out his boat into the deep, and all of them to cast out their nets once more. Peter was in a despondent mood; but the mere word of One whom he so deeply revered, and whose power he had already witnessed, was sufficient. And his faith was rewarded. Instantly a vast haul of fishes crowded into the nets. — *Farrar*.

5. **Master.** A title which was given even to such teachers as any one entertained respect for, without as yet standing in a personal relation to them (compare Luke 17: 13). — *Van Oosterzee*. All

all the night, and have taken nothing:¹ nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And² when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto *their* partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help³ them. And they came, and

filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down⁴ at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes⁵ which they had taken:

10 And so *was* also James, and

¹ Ps. 127: 1, 2. Ezek. 37: 11, 12. ² Eccl. 11: 6. Gal. 6: 9. ³ Exod. 23: 5. Prov. 18: 24. Gal. 6: 1.
⁴ Judg. 13: 22. 2 Sam. 6: 9. 1 Kings 17: 13. Isa. 6: 5. ⁵ Ps. 8: 6, 8.

the night. The ordinary time of fishing (see John 21: 3). There are certain kinds of fishing always carried on at night. It is a beautiful sight. With blazing torch the boat glides over the flashing sea; and the men stand gazing keenly into it until their prey is sighted, when, quick as lightning, they fling their net, or fly their spear. — *Dr. Thomson*. Nevertheless at thy word, &c. This implies a previous acquaintance of the Lord, from which he had already received impressions of his power, and of the weight of his words. — *Trench*.

6. Their net brake. Rather, was breaking. If there was here an actual rent, it was of course only a beginning of tearing, since otherwise the whole draught might have been immediately lost again. — *Van Oosterzee*. It was not merely that Christ by his omniscience knew that now there were fishes in that spot; but rather we are to contemplate him as the Lord of nature, who by the secret yet mighty magic of his will was able to wield and guide even the unconscious creatures to his aims. — *Trench*.

7. They beckoned. They beckoned on account of the distance; or perhaps for the reason given by Euthymius, not being able to speak from their amazement and fear. — *Alford*. Their partners. James and John (verse 10).

8, 9. Depart from me. A busy scene followed. The instinct of work first prevailed. Simon and Andrew beckoned to Zebedee and his sons and servants to come in their boat, and help to save the miraculous draught and straining nets. Both boats were filled to the gunwale with the load; and at the first moment that the work was finished, and Peter recognized the whole force of the miracle, he falls, with his usual eager impetuosity, at his Master's feet—to thank him? to offer him henceforth an absolute devotion? No; but (and here we have a touch of indescribable truthfulness, utterly beyond the power of the most consummate intellect to have invented) to exclaim, "DEPART FROM ME, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" A flash of supernatural illumination had revealed to him both his own sinful unworthiness, and who He was who was with him in the boat. It was the cry of self-loathing which had already realized something nobler. It was the first impulse of fear and amazement, before they had had time to grow into adoration and love. St. Peter did not mean the "Depart from me:" he only meant,—and this was known to the Searcher of hearts,—"I am utterly unworthy to be near thee, yet let me stay." — *Farrar*. The speech is in exact keeping with the quick discernment, and expression of feeling, of Peter's character. Similar sayings are found (Exod. 20: 18, 19. Judg. 13: 22. 1 Kings 17: 18. Isa. 6: 5. Dan. 10: 17). — *Alford*. Below this, is the utterly profane state, in which there is no contrast, no contradiction felt, between the holy and the unholy, between God and man. Above it is the state of grace, in which the contradiction is felt, the deep gulf perceived, which divides between sinful man and a holy God; yet it is felt that this gulf is bridged over, that it is possible for the two to meet,—that in One, who is sharer with both, they have already been brought together. — *Trench*.

10. James. This is the only one of the apostles of whose life and death we can write with certainty. He was called at this time to be a disciple of Christ. The next year he was appointed one of the twelve apostles, and at that time probably received the title of Boanerges. He was admitted to the raising of Jairus's daughter. He witnessed the transfiguration. He was present at the agony in the garden. On the day of the ascension he is mentioned as persevering with the rest of the apostles and disciples in prayer. He was put to death by Herod (Acts 12: 2). — *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. John. John was the son of Zebedee and Salome (compare Matt. 27: 56, with Mark 15: 40, 41). It would appear that he was not destitute of property, and was not in the lowest condition of life. He had hired men in his employ (Mark 1: 20). Salome is described as one who attended our Saviour in his travels, and ministered to his wants (Matt. 27: 55. Mark 15: 41). Jesus

John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook¹ all, and followed him.

¹ Matt. 4: 20; 19: 27. Phil. 3: 7, 8.

commended his own mother Mary, on the cross, to John; and he took her to his own home (John 19: 26, 27), with whom, history informs us, she lived until her death, about 15 years after the crucifixion of Christ; and John was known to Calaphas the high priest (John 18: 15). From all this it would seem not improbable that John had some property, and was better known than any of the other apostles. He was the youngest of the apostles when called, and lived to the greatest age, and is the only one who is supposed to have died a peaceful death. — *Barnes*. Fear not. How gently the answer came! "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Our Lord, as in all his teaching, seized and applied with exquisite significance the circumstances of the moment. Round them in the little boat lay in heaps the glittering spoil of the lake, — glittering, but with a glitter that began to fade in death. Henceforth that sinful man, washed and cleansed, and redeemed and sanctified, was to chase with nobler labor a spoil, which, by being entangled in the gospel net, would not die, but be saved alive. And his brother and his partners, they, too, were to become "fishers of men." — *Farrar*. Thou shalt catch men. *Thou shalt be a catcher of men*. Compare, and indeed throughout this miracle, the striking parallel, and yet contrast, in John 21, with its injunction, "Feed my lambs," "Shepherd my sheep," given to the same Peter, — its net which *did not burst*, — and the minute and beautiful appropriateness of each will be seen; this at or near the commencement of the apostolic course, that at how different and how fitting a time! — *Alford*. The fisherman is to catch men as David the shepherd, taken from among the sheep-folds, was to feed them. There is in these words a double magnifying of Peter's future function as compared with his past; that it is *men* and not poor fishes henceforth which he shall take, and that he shall take them *for life*, and not as he had taken his meaner prey, only for death. For no less than this is involved in the original word by which the catching is expressed. — *Trench*.

11. They forsook all. They did this before (Matt. 4: 20); now they do it again; and yet after the crucifixion they are at their boats once more (John 21: 3). In such a business this is easily conceivable. After Pentecost, however, they appear to have finally abandoned their secular calling. But what was that "*all*" which "*they forsook*," ask some, that they should afterwards seem to make so much of it, saying, "Behold, we have forsaken *all*, and followed thee: what shall we have therefore?" (Matt. 19: 27.) It was their *all*, and therefore, though it might have been but a few poor boats and nets, it was much. And the forsaking consists not in the more or less that is forsaken, but in the spirit in which it is left. These apostles might have left little when they left their possessions; but they left much, when they left their desires. — *Trench*. Zebedee soon returned without his sons to Bethsaida (Mark 1: 20), while they proceeded with the Lord through Capernaum's gate, to enter with him afterwards upon the journey through Galilee. — *Van Oosterzee*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Thou shalt catch men. "Admire," exclaims Chrysostom, "the dispensation of the Lord, how he draws each by the art which is most familiar and natural to him; as the Magians by a star, so the fishermen by fish." A thought which Donne in a sermon on this text enlarges thus: "The Holy Ghost speaks in such forms and such phrases as may most work upon them to whom he speaks. Of David, that was a shepherd before, God says, he took him to feed his people. To those Magi of the East, who were given to the study of the stars, God gave a star to be their guide to Christ at Bethlehem. To those who followed him to Capernaum for meat, Christ took occasion by that to preach to them of the spiritual food of their souls. To the Samaritan woman whom he found at the well, he preached of the water of life. To these men accustomed to a joy and gladness when they took great store of fish, he presents his comforts agreeably to their taste, — they should be fishers still." — *Trench*.

II. Catching men illustrated. The late Rev. Henry Venn, in a letter descriptive of a tour through different parts of England, says, "From Bath, through Bristol and Gloucester, we arrived at Trevecca in Wales. Howell Harris is the father of that settlement, and the founder. After laboring for 15 years, more violently than any other of the servants of Christ, in this revival, he was so hurt in body as to be confined to his own house for seven years. Upon the beginning of this confinement, first one and then another whom the Lord had converted under

his word, to the number of nearly 100, came and desired to live with him, saying that they would work and get their bread. By this means, nearly 120 men and children from very distant parts of Wales came and fixed their tents at Trevecca. We were there three days, and heard their experience, which they spoke in Welsh to Mr. Harris, and he interpreted to us. Of all the people I ever saw, this society seems to be the most advanced in grace. They speak as men and women who feel themselves every moment worthy of eternal punishment, and infinitely base, and yet, at the same time, have such certainty of salvation through the second man, the Lord from heaven, as is indeed delightful to behold. My heart received a blessing from them and their pastor, which will abide with me." — *Whitecross*.

III. They forsook all. A man may be holden by love to a miserable hovel with as fast bands as to a sumptuous palace; for it is the worldly affection which holds him, and not the world. Just as we gather from the warnings scattered through the ascetic books of the middle ages, how they who had renounced, it may be, great possessions in the world, would now, if they did not earnestly watch against it, come to cling to their hood, their breviary, the scanty furniture of their bare cell, with the same feelings of property as they once exercised in ampler matters, so witnessing that they had no more succeeded in curing themselves of worldly affections, than a man would succeed in curing himself of covetousness by putting out the eye which in times past had been often the inlet of desire. — *Trench*.

PRACTICAL.

1. Christ comes to us while performing our daily duties.
2. It is blessed to have him take possession of our homes and property to use for teaching and saving men.
3. When we toil alone in any work, it is as night, and it is hard work with small results.
4. When we work at Jesus' word and in his conscious presence, it is sunlight, and the results are abundant.
5. Learn a lesson of mutual assistance.
6. Those whom Christ designs to admit to the most intimate acquaintance with him, he first makes sensible that they deserve to be set at the greatest distance. — *Henry*.
7. God's wonderful works of grace and his most marvellous mercies to us make us feel our unworthiness most deeply.
8. The call of Jesus. (1) Invitation to full communion with him, (2) demand of perfect renunciation for his sake, (3) announcement of new sphere of activity under him, (4) promise of rich reward from him. It is a call, (1) to faith, (2) to labor, (3) to suffering and cross-bearing, (4) to our blessed home. The apostleship compared to fishing: (1) We must know the lake, (2) and how to allure, (3) have patience to wait, (4) be ready to hazard life, (5) must cast out the net in confidence, (6) expect a draught. — *Lange*.
9. To be caught by the Lord is on earth the greatest blessedness. After this there is no greater than to be able to catch men for the Lord. — *Lohr*.
10. Men catch fishes, and the fishes die: they catch men, that they may live.
11. Learn from fishers, how to catch men; skill in bait; care in approach; times and seasons; gentle measures.
12. All that Jesus asks is that we should leave *all* we have for him; that we should love him *more* than we do whatever friends or property we may possess, and be willing to give them all up when he requires them.

LESSON VI. — AUGUST 11, 1878.

THE CENTURION'S FAITH. — LUKE 7: 1-10.

TIME. A. D. 28; Christ 31 years old.

PLACE. Still at Capernaum in Galilee.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

THE CONNECTION.

Compare Matt. 8: 5-13. These verses describe the miraculous cure of a sick man. A centurion, or officer in the Roman army, applies to our Lord on behalf of his servant, and obtains what he requests. A greater miracle of healing than this is nowhere recorded in the Gospels. Without

even seeing the sufferer, without touch of hand or look of eye, our Lord restores health to a dying man by a single word. — *Ryle*. After the scene of the last lesson, on the Lake Genesaret, Christ went up to Jerusalem to a feast, and healed the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5), returned to Galilee, and taught, and worked miracles (Matt. 12: 1-21. Mark 2: 33-38. Luke 6). He called his twelve apostles (Matt. 10: 2-4. Mark 3: 13-19. Luke 6: 12-19), and then preached his wonderful Sermon on the Mount (Luke, ch. 6. Matt. chs. 5-7). It appears that the miracle of this lesson was wrought immediately after the Sermon on the Mount.

1 Now¹ when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

2 And a certain centurion's ser-

vant, who was dear² unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the

¹ Matt. 8: 5, &c. ² Job 31: 15. Prov. 29: 21.

EXPLANATORY.

1. **Now when he had ended all his sayings.** The Sermon on the Mount. The following narrative is a striking instance of variation in word where there is no contradiction in purpose or thought. In Matthew's account (Matt. 8: 5-13) the centurion *came unto him, saying*. In the present account, he sent the elders of Israel. Matthew makes our Lord say, *I will come*. Luke says, Jesus *went with them*. Now, these variations are, we think, fairly reconciled, on the principle "that what a man does by another he does by himself." The act of an agent is the act of the principal. We have no hesitation to say that the king conquers a country, or that Solomon built the temple, though both were done entirely through their subjects. Matthew then gives the briefer substance; Luke gives the details. But Matthew, reading Luke, would not for a moment have supposed himself to be contradicted. He would only have seen the story more explicitly given, and some interesting points added. — *Whedon*. **Entered into Capernaum.** The hill, called Horns of Hatin, on which the Sermon on the Mount was probably delivered, lies about seven miles south-west from Capernaum. For Capernaum, see introduction to Lesson V.

2. **Certain centurion.** A Roman military officer. All Palestine was under Roman military government; this centurion was probably connected with the garrison at Capernaum. The Roman army was divided into legions, answering to our army corps, varying in size from 3,000 to 6,000 men; each legion was divided into ten cohorts (regiments), usually called in the New Testament, the "band;" the cohort was divided into three maniples (battalions), and each maniple was divided into two centuries. These last contained from 50 to 100 men, answering to our "company"; and each one was commanded by a centurion, answering to our captain. There were thus in each legion 60 centuries, each under the command of a centurion. — *Abbott*. **Servant.** Luke says *doulos*, servant; but Matthew has it *pais*, boy. — *Whedon*. This indicates that the relation between this centurion and his servant was one unusually tender. — *Abbott*. **Was dear unto him.** Such instances of affection are more common in military than in domestic service. The regard which the master should have for his servant, especially in case of sickness, has been used by the commentators as one of the morals indicated by this incident. "This centurion did not act as many masters do when their servants are afflicted, — have them immediately removed to an infirmary or a workhouse" (Adam Clark). — *Abbott*. **Was sick.** Matthew says, "sick of the palsy," i.e., paralysis. This is not contradicted by the fact that he is said to have been grievously tormented; for paralysis, or palsy, with the contraction of the joints, is accompanied with severe pain. United with tetanus, as it sometimes is in Eastern countries, extreme suffering and rapid dissolution are often the result. — *Whedon*.

3. **Sent unto him.** With the higher matters which he had learned from his intercourse with the people of the covenant, he had learned, no doubt, this: that all heathens, all "sinners of the Gentiles," were "without;" that there was a middle wall of partition between them and the children of the stock of Abraham; that they were to worship only as in the outer court, not presuming to draw near to the holy place. And thus he did not himself approach, but sent others to Jesus in whom he recognized a being of a higher world. — *Trench*. The elders of the Jews The word literally signifies the older men. But, as it became an official epithet, it acquired the official sense. The elders of Israel were anciently the heads of the tribes, chosen for their age and wisdom. In latter times, subsequent to the restoration from the captivity, a part of the Sanhedrim consisted, with the chief priests and the scribes, also of the elders. Similarly the courts of the individual towns, consisting of seven judges, were composed of the elders of Israel. In the present case, the elders were of this last class. The centurion, feeling that as a Gentile and a sinner, he

Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this :

5 For he loveth¹ our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

6 Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble² not thyself: for I am not

worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof:

7 Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say³ in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

¹ 1 Kings 5: 1. Gal. 5: 6. 1 John 3: 14; 5: 1, 2. ² ch. 8: 49. ³ Ps. 107: 20.

might have little hope of a favorable reception from the holy and divine prophet of the Jews, the wonderful Jesus, sends the most weighty men and magistrates of Jewish Capernaum. — *Whedon*.

4. **He was worthy.** This centurion was by birth a heathen; but, like him in the Acts (10: 1) who bore the same office, was one of the many who were at this time deeply feeling the emptiness of all polytheistic religions, and who had attached themselves by taxes or closer bonds to the congregation of Israel and the worship of Jehovah, finding in Judaism a satisfaction of some of the deepest needs of their souls, and a promise of the satisfaction of all. He was one among the many who are distinguished from the seed of Abraham, yet described as fearing God, or worshipping God, of whom we read so often in the Acts, — the proselytes, whom the providence of God had so wonderfully prepared in all the great cities of the Greek and Roman world as a link of communication between Gentile and Jew, in contact with both, holding to the first by their race, and to the last by their religion; and who must have greatly helped to the ultimate fusion of both into one Christian church. — *Trench*.

5. **He loveth our nation.** In a Roman soldier, such faith and love as we see here described were very extraordinary. "A Roman soldier," says Bunyan, "was the first fruit of the Gentile world." "Even the bloody trade of war," says Bishop Hall, "yielded worthy clients to Christ. This Roman captain had learned to believe in that Jesus whom many Jews despised. No nation, no trade, can shut out a good heart from God. If he was a foreigner in birth, yet he was a domestic in heart." — *Ryle*. **Hath built us a synagogue.** The English version here can hardly be said to give the full sense of the Greek. The meaning is, "He hath himself built us a synagogue;" that is, at his own expense and charges. — *Ryle*. There are several examples on record of individuals who had founded Jewish synagogues. Even the founding of one by a heathen suggests no difficulty, since the sanctity of the place did not depend upon the founder, but on the religious consecration. — *Van Oosterzee*.

6. **Sent friends.** Hearing that the Lord was coming, he sent friends with this second humble message, showing his belief in his faith and grace. — *Jacobus*. **I am not worthy.** But presently even this request which he had made seemed to him too great a boldness. In his true and ever-deepening humility he counted it a presumption to have asked, though by the intervention of others, the presence under his roof of so exalted a personage. In Augustine's words, "While he counted himself unworthy that Christ should enter into his doors, he was counted worthy that Christ should enter into his heart" — a far better boon; for Christ sat down in the houses of men, as of that proud, self-righteous Pharisee, whose hearts were not for this the less empty of his presence. But this centurion received Him in his heart, whom he did not receive in his house. — *Trench*.

7. **Neither thought I myself worthy.** Observe three estimates of the centurion's character first his own, *not worthy*, because a Gentile, and because a sinner; second, the Jewish estimate, *worthy*, because he had built a Jewish synagogue, the highest encomium on character which a Jewish elder could pass on a Gentile outcast; third, Jesus' estimate, *worthy, because of his faith*, and needing no commendation from Jewish elders, but himself an example and a rebuke to them. — *Abbott*. **Say in a word.** Contrast the centurion's faith, who trusts all to the word of Christ, with Martha's, who trusts only to his prayer to God (John 11: 21, 23). — *Abbott*.

8. **A man set under authority, &c.** The meaning is, "I know how to obey, being myself under authority; and in turn know how others obey, having soldiers under me;" inferring, "If, then, I in my subordinate station of command am obeyed, how much more thou, who art over all, and whom diseases serve as their master!" — *Alford*.

9 When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have

not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

9. **He marvelled at him.** There are two occasions where it is recorded that our Lord Jesus Christ "marvelled:" once in this history, and once in Mark 6: 6. It is remarkable that in one case he is described as marvelling at "faith," and in the other as marvelling at "unbelief." Bishop Hall, and Burkitt after him, both observe, "What can be more wonderful than to see Christ wonder?"—*Ryle*. So great faith. It was not merely belief, or hope, or expectation, which was exemplified, but faith as a moral power, impelling to action against moral obstacles. It was not merely an *intellectual perception*, but also a *moral resolution*; which made the naturally sceptical Roman apply to a messenger of the God of the Jews; which made the naturally proud Roman apply to a prophet of a people whom the Romans despised and classed with slaves; which made a naturally haughty military officer recognize the superior authority of one who was under his military control, but whose power was from above; which made the naturally callous Roman appeal for help, not in his own behalf, but on that of a mere chattel servant.—*Abbott*. No, not in Israel. Where he would have expected the most faith. The strongest faith and the greatest piety often appear in persons and places where we would least expect them.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. **Centurion's servant who was dear unto him.** I remember, says Dr. Doddridge, in his "Life of Col. Gardener," I had once occasion to visit one of his dragoons in his last illness at Harborough, and I found the man upon the borders of eternity; a circumstance which, as he apprehended himself, must add some peculiar weight and credibility to his discourse. And he then told me, in his colonel's absence, that he questioned not, but he should have everlasting reason to bless God on Col. Gardener's account; for he had been a father to him in all his interests, both temporal and spiritual. He added, that he had visited him almost every day during his illness, with religious advice and instruction, as well as taken care that he should want for nothing that might conduce to the recovery of his health. And he did not speak of this as the result of any particular attachment to him, but as the manner in which he was accustomed to treat those under his command.—*Whitecross*.

II. **I am not worthy.** If thou desire the love of God and man, be humble; for the proud heart, as it loves none but itself, so it is beloved of none but itself. The voice of humility is God's music, and the silence of humility is God's rhetoric. Humility enforces where neither virtue nor strength can prevail, nor reason.—*Quarles*.

III. **Saving faith.** A sea-captain related at a prayer-meeting in Boston a short time ago a thrilling incident in his own experience. "A few years ago," said he, "I was sailing by the island of Cuba, when the cry ran through the ship, 'Man overboard!' It was impossible to put up the helm of the ship, but I instantly seized a rope and, threw it over the ship's stern, crying out to the man to seize it as for his life. The sailor caught the rope just as the ship was passing. I immediately took another rope, and, making a slip-noose of it, attached it to the other, and slid it down to the struggling sailor, and directed him to pass it over his shoulders and under his arms, and he would be drawn on board. He was rescued; but he had grasped that rope with such firmness, with such a death-grip, that it took hours before his hold relaxed, and his hand could be separated from it. With such eagerness, indeed, had he clutched the object that was to save him, that the strands of the rope became embedded in the flesh of his hands."—*Spurgeon*.

IV. The felt need of God makes us stretch out the hands of our faith, and take a stronger hold on God. The stormy sea makes us look for the helping hand of Jesus. And we often learn more of faith in one month of darkness and storm, than in years of sunshine. When God would prepare us for higher work, for sweeter peace, for clearer light, he brings them by an increase of faith, and increases our faith by trying our faith. In the early dawn of Britain, Cuthbert left his sheep, and went to preaching Christ. One day with three companions on the sea, he was tossed by a storm upon a dreary shore; and his comrades cried to him,—

"Cuthbert, let us perish: hope is o'er;
The furious tempest shuts the water path;
The snow-storm blinds us on the bitter land."

"Now, wherefore, friends, have ye so little faith?" God's servant said; and, stretching forth his hand toward heaven, —

"He lifted up his reverent eyes, and spake, —
I thank thee, Lord, the way is open there:
No storm above our heads in wrath shall break,
And shut the heavenward path of love and prayer."

The heavenward path of love and prayer is never shut to faith by earthly storms: it is opened by them. From the pillow of stones, we see the gates ajar. In the darkness of earth, are shown to us the infinite worlds above; our dreams become steps to heaven; and our hills of difficulty, mountains of transfiguration. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 1.) One duty follows close on another.
2. (Verse 2.) The duties of masters to the *bodies* of their servants consist in these particulars: viz., in a due provision of food; in a well ordering of labor, so as they may be able to undergo it; their ease, rest, and intermission from labor at seasonable times; in paying them sufficient wages; in a careful preserving of their health, and using means for their recovery in case of sickness, — and that not of the servant's wages, but of the master's own charge; otherwise they undo not the heavy burden, but rather lay burden upon burden. The duty of masters to the *souls* of their servants consists in these particulars: viz., in teaching them the principles of religion, and all duties of piety; in causing them to attend the public ministry of the word and worship of God; in taking account of their profiting by the public and private means of edification; in praying for them; and, as they observe any grace wrought in them, in praising God for it, and praying for the increase of it. — *Biblical Treasury*.
3. (Verse 3.) In every trouble we should go immediately to Jesus. — *Biblical Museum*.
4. We should get our friends to join with us, according to the promise that, "where two or three are gathered in my name, there will I be also."
5. (Verses 4, 6.) Note the different estimations of this man. He felt himself unworthy, but Jesus and the others knew he was worthy. Worldly greatness is not always humble; but goodness, and therefore true greatness, is humble.
6. (Verse 5.) Good deeds flowing from faith lead to an increase of faith. They are steps to fuller blessings.
7. Faith is not confined to time, place, or condition. — *Luther*.
8. Faith ever says, *If thou wilt*; not, *If thou canst*. — *Luther*.
9. (Verse 6.) Jesus is ever willing to come under our roof, although we be unworthy of it. — *Huebner*.
10. (Verse 8.) The centurion's faith was persevering, humble, working, complete, and therefore, as such faith always is, successful.
11. Christ our Saviour has absolute and perfect control over all things; therefore our faith can rest on him without wavering.
12. (Verse 9.) Christ marvelled twice: once at unbelief, once at faith. Let his marvel about us be as the greatness of our faith.
13. Faith is often greatest where outward advantages are least.

LESSON VII.—AUGUST 18, 1878.

THE WIDOW OF NAIN.—LUKE 7: 11-17.

TIME. A.D. 28.

PLACE. Nain in Galilee, 20 or 25 miles south-west of Capernaum.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

THE CONNECTION.

Our Lord healed, probably, every kind of disease known in Palestine. He had raised the dying from the beds they had not hoped to leave again. But he had not yet raised the dead. This alone was wanting to complete the evidences of divine power which his miracles offered. The very next day [after the healing of the centurion's servant, related in the last lesson] supplied this farther attestation — *Ryle*.

11 And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only

son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

EXPLANATORY.

11. **The day after**,—after the healing of the centurion's servant. **He went into a city called Nain.** Nain occurs nowhere else in the Bible. It was a town of Galilee, not far from Capernaum, a few miles to the south of Mount Tabor.—*Alford*. "On the northern slope of the rugged and barren ridge of Little Hermon," says Stanley, "immediately west of Endor, which lies in a farther recess of the same range, is the ruined village of Nain. No convent, no tradition, marks the spot; but under these circumstances the name is sufficient to guarantee its authenticity. One entrance alone could it have had,—that which opens on the rough hillside in its downward slope to the plain. It must have been in this descent, as, according to Eastern custom, they 'carried out the dead man,' that 'nigh to the gate' of the village the bier was stopped, and the long procession of mourners stayed, and the young man delivered back to his mother. It is a spot which has no peculiarity of feature to fix it on the memory.—*Sinai and Palestine*, p. 349.

12. **When he came nigh to the gate of the city.** Ancient cities were very commonly surrounded by walls, to protect them from enemies: and hence the gates. But at the entrance of almost every town in the East is a gate, although there be no wall; and, as people pass in and out this way, it was formerly the place of public assembling and of the dispensing of justice. The Jews, as well as the Greeks and Romans, were accustomed to bury their dead outside the gates, except that the kings of David's house were buried within the city of David (2 Kings 21: 18). The practice of burying in churchyards was introduced, perhaps, in honor of the early martyrs. (See Jer. 22: 19.)—*Jacobus*. **Behold, there was a dead man . . . the only son of a widow.** That our Lord should meet the funeral at the gate of the city, while it belonged, no doubt, to the wonder-works of God's grace, while it was one of those marvellous coincidences which, seeming accidental, are yet deep laid in the counsels of his wisdom and of his love, is at the same time a natural circumstance, to be explained by the fact that the Jews did not suffer the interring of the dead in towns, but had their burial-places without the walls. Probably there was very much in the circumstances of the sad procession which he now met, to arouse the compassion even of those who were not touched with so lively a feeling for human sorrows as was the compassionate Saviour of men; and it was this which had brought that "*much people*" to accompany the bier. Indeed, there could little be added to the words of the evangelist, whose whole narrative here, apart from its deeper interest, is a master-work for its perfect beauty,—there could be little added to it to make the picture of desolation more complete. The bitterness of the mourning for an only son had passed into a proverb (Jer. 6: 26. Zech. 12: 10. Amos 8: 10).—(*Farrar*). **Much people was with her.** This expression should not be overlooked. It shows the publicity of the great miracle here recorded. It was wrought before many witnesses.—*Ryle*.

13. **He had compassion on her, . . . said, Weep not.** What mingled majesty and grace shines in this scene! the Resurrection and the Life in human flesh, with a word of command, bringing back life to the dead body; Incarnate Compassion summoning its absolute power to dry a widow's tears!—*J. F. and B.* None moved our Lord on behalf of the widow; neither do we read that she herself spake to him. The leper was healed (Luke 5: 12) in reply to his own personal application; the centurion's servant (Luke 7: 1) in reply to the prayer of his master; and the widow's son was raised without any one interceding on his behalf.—*Poole*. How different this "*weep not*" from the "*weep not*" which often proceeds from the lips of earthly comforters, who, even while they speak the words, give no reason why the mourner should cease from weeping; but He that is come that he may one day make good that word, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21: 4), does show now some effectual glimpses of his power, wiping away, though not yet forever, the tears from the weeping eyes of that desolate mother.—*Trench*. Sympathy for the mother is specified as that which determined Jesus to waken him who reposed in the coffin. But that does not exclude a regard for the man himself in the transaction. Man, as a conscious being, can never be merely a means, as would be the case here if the mother's joy were the sole purpose of the raising of the young man. It is rather the immediate result of the action, noticeable by the bystanders, but the less essential one: the comforted

14 And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare *him* stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee,¹ Arise.

15 And he that was dead² sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

16 And there came a fear on all:

and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet³ is risen up among us; and, That⁴ God hath visited his people.

17 And this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judæa, and throughout all the region round about.

¹ ch. 8: 54. Acts 9: 40. Rom. 4: 17. ² 2 Kings 4: 32-37; 13: 21. John 11: 44. ³ ch. 24: 19. ⁴ ch. 1: 68.

result was the *spiritual awakening* of the youth to a higher existence, by means of which even the mother's joy first became true and lasting. — *Olshausen*. Here was no solicitor but his own compassion. While we have to do with the Father of mercies, our afflictions are the most powerful suitors. — *Bishop Hall*.

14. **Touched the bier.** The Jews did not use a coffin for their dead: this belonged to Babylon and Egypt. On the Nile, standing at Old Cairo, we saw a funeral procession. The coffin was like a mummy-case, with a tall head-board covered with red shawls and silk, and all under a canopy. At Alexandria we saw a funeral procession headed by four young men (priests), two in white, two in common blue dress, the pairs chanting responsively. Four persons carried the plain wooden bier, like that upon which our coffins are carried. The corpse was in a coffin having a low head-piece. But in Constantinople we saw such a funeral as this at Nain. The body was stretched out upon a long bier, like one asleep on a bed, covered with shawls and silk. The head, hands, and feet were bare. The bier was carried by four persons. — *Jacobus*. The drawing nigh and touching the bier was meant as an intimation to the bearers that they should arrest their steps, and one which they understood; for immediately "they that bare him stood still." — *Trench*. I say unto thee, Arise. I that am the resurrection and the life, quickening "the dead, and calling those things which be not, as though they were." And that word was heard; for "*he that was dead sat up and began to speak.*" Christ rouses from the bier as easily as another would rouse from the bed, — different in this even from his own messengers and ministers in the old covenant; for they, not without an effort, not without a long and earnest wrestling with God, won back its prey from the jaws of death; and this because there dwelt not the *fullness* of power in them, who were but as servants in the house of another, not as a son in his own house. — *Trench*. It must have been a moment of intense and breathless expectation. Unbidden, but filled with undefinable awe, the bearers of the bier stood still. And then through the hearts of the stricken mourners, and through the hearts of the silent multitude, there thrilled the calm utterance, "Young man, arise!" Would that dread sentence thrill also through the unknown mysterious solitudes of death? would it thrill through the impenetrable darkness of the more than midnight which has ever concealed from human vision the world beyond the grave? It did. — *Farrar*.

15. **He that was dead sat up.** This is one of the three greatest miracles of our Lord; of which it has been observed that he raised one (Jairus's daughter) when *just dead*, one on the way to burial, and one (Lazarus) who *had been buried* four days. All three raisings from the dead are wrought with words of power: "Damsel, arise," "Young man, arise," "Lazarus, come forth." — *A'ford*. **Delivered him to his mother.** Luke here hints at the Old Testament instances in 1 Kings 17: 23, and 2 Kings 4: 36, "Take thy son hence." The same Redeemer who does this will once, when the great word, "Rise up," shall call all the dead, give back to all his separated ones their own beloved whom he has raised for personal recognition and special communion. As surely as there is to be a resurrection, so surely is there to be such a recognition and possession again of our beloved ones, if we and they are Christ's, — those whom he has raised from spiritual death, and who are his to give back to those whom he loves. — *Jacobus*.

16. **And there came a fear on all.** They were naturally enough awed at this direct exertion of miraculous power. Nothing could go beyond this work of *raising the dead*. — *J*. Great prophet. Only the greatest prophets, Elijah and Elisha, had been known to raise the dead; and they not by a word, but by exertions of a power not belonging to themselves. — *Jacobus*.

17. **This rumor.** The fame of this deed. It passed all the way through Samaria, and into Judæa.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. **He had compassion on her.** Happy is the man who has that in his soul which acts upon the dejected as April airs upon violet roots. Gifts from the hand are silver and gold, but the heart gives that which neither silver nor gold can buy. To be full of goodness, full of cheerfulness,

full of sympathy, full of helpful hope, causes a man to carry blessings of which he is himself as unconscious as a lamp of its own shining. Such a one moves on human life as stars move on dark seas to bewildered mariners, as the sun wheels, bringing all the seasons with him from the south. — *Beecher*.

II. He came . . . touched the bier. It is said that gardeners sometimes, when they would bring a rose to richer flowering, deprive it for a season of light and moisture. Silent and dark it stands, dropping one fading leaf after another, and seeming to go down patiently to death. But when every leaf is dropped, and the plant stands stripped to the uttermost, a new life is even then working in the buds, from which shall spring a tender foliage and a brighter wealth of flowers. So often, in celestial gardening, every leaf of earthly joy must drop before a new and divine bloom visits the soul. — *H. B. Stowe*.

III. It is said that the Romans had a practice of lighting up their tombs by placing lamps in them. These lamps have been often found. Man does need a light to scatter the terrors of the dark grave. Christ, the light of the world, makes the Christian's tomb all light. — *Biblical Museum*.

IV. I say unto thee, Arise. Oh, my soul, dost thou now dread to die? Thou wilt lose thy partner body a little while, but thou wilt be married again in heaven; soul and body shall again be united before the throne of God. The grave, what is it? It is the bath in which the Christian puts the clothes of his body to have them washed and cleansed. Death, what is it? It is the waiting-room where we robe ourselves for immortality. Death is the gate of life. — *Spurgeon*.

"Shudder not to pass the stream:
Venture all thy care on Him, —
Him whose dying love and power
Stilled its tossing, hushed its roar.

"Safe in the expanded wave,
Gentle as a summer's eve,
Not one object of his care
Ever suffered shipwreck there."

V. Alas! many a man is dead while he liveth; yea, all are dead who live in impenitence and presumptuous sins. God is the soul of our soul, and the life of our life; and Christ must dwell in our heart by faith, and be the heart of our heart, to enable us to say with St. Paul, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Just as the heart is the workshop of the soul, from which it distributes natural heat and vital energy into all the veins and members, even so must the Lord Jesus generate in us spiritual life, and diffuse his Spirit into all our powers, senses, desires, thoughts, and motions. The ungodly man is a living corpse; the worm of sinful desire consumes his conscience; he is an abomination in the eyes of the Saviour, and offensive to God and the holy angels. — *Gethold*.

PRACTICAL.

1. Learn the great compassion of our Lord. His heart is still as compassionate as when he lived on earth.
2. Genuine Christians follow Christ wherever he goes, — to Cana or Nain, towards Tabor or towards Golgotha. — *Starks*.
3. The world is a lovely city of Nain; but death comes, and turns its brightness into darkness.
4. The power of our Lord Jesus. Even death obeys his word: therefore fear not death.
5. The proof of a future life. Jesus could bring none from the other world unless they existed after death.
6. Here is an emblem of Christ, raising the dead in sin to life.
7. Sin is like death and the grave, — dark, sad, blind, ignorant.
8. The resurrection is life, — beautiful, active, joyous, growing, bright.
9. At every new mercy, every new proof of Jesus' love and power, we should glorify God.

LESSON VIII. — AUGUST 25, 1878.

THE FRIEND OF SINNERS. — LUKE 7: 40-50.

TIME. A.D. 28. Jesus 31-32 years old.

PLACE. Probably Capernaum.

RULERS. Tiberias Cæsar, emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

THE CONNECTION.

It seems to have been on the same day as the incident of the last lesson, that, perhaps at Nain, perhaps at Magdala, Jesus received and accepted an invitation from one of the Pharisees who bore the very common name of Simon. The cause or object of the invitation we do not know. Probably, in inviting him, Simon was influenced partly by curiosity, partly by the desire to receive a popular and distinguished teacher, partly by willingness to show a distant approval of something which may have struck him in Christ's looks or words or ways. It is quite clear that the hospitality was meant to be qualified and condescending. All the ordinary attentions which would have been paid to an honored guest were coldly and cautiously omitted. A poor stained, fallen woman, notorious in the place for her evil life, discovering that Jesus was supping in the house of the Pharisee, ventured to make her way there among the throng of other visitants, carrying with her an alabaster box of spikenard. (There is no good reason for thinking that this woman was Mary Magdalene, though tradition says so.) She began to weep, and her tears dropped fast upon his unsandalled feet, over which she bent lower and lower to hide her confusion and her shame; she drew yet nearer to him, and, sinking down upon her knees, began with her long dishevelled hair to wipe the feet which had been wetted with her tears, and then to cover them with kisses, and at last, breaking the alabaster vase, to bathe them with the precious and fragrant nard. But Simon the Pharisee looked on with icy dislike and disapproval. The irresistible appeal to pity of that despairing and broken-hearted mourner did not move him. — *Farrar*.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one

owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing¹ to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

¹ Ps. 49: 7, 8. Rom. 5: 6.

EXPLANATORY.

40. And Jesus answering said, &c. He answered, not Simon's words, but his thoughts. The Pharisee did not utter his thoughts aloud; but his frigid demeanor, and the contemptuous expression of countenance which he did not take the trouble to disguise, showed all that was passing in his heart. Our Lord heard his thoughts, but did not at once reprove and expose his cold uncharity and unrelenting hardness. In order to call general attention to his words, he addressed his host. — *Farrar*.

41. A certain creditor. Under the image of the creditor the Lord depicts himself, while in the debtor that owed the more, and the one that owed the less, we behold respectively the portrait of the sinner and of Simon. Five hundred pence . . . fifty. Five hundred pence, about \$69.25; fifty, about \$7. — *Barnes*.

42. When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. What depth of meaning there is in these words, if we reflect *who* said them and by what means this forgiveness was to be wrought! Observe that the "could not pay" is pregnant with more than at first appears. *How* is this incapacity discovered to the creditor in the parable? how but *by* (the debtors) *themselves*? Here, then, is the *sense* and *confession* of sin; not a bare objective fact, followed by a decree of forgiveness; but the incapacity is an *avowed* one, the forgiveness is a *personal* one. — *Alford*. To him who is penniless, a debt of fifty is as fatal as a debt of five hundred. There is total inability to pay. So are we all before God. Yet here the helplessness is supposed to be *felt* and confessed. *Frankly forgive*; freely, graciously cancelled the debt. That is the only kind of forgiveness that would answer in such case of utter inability (Col. 2: 13). Unless we can be saved without merit, we cannot be saved at all. — *Jacobus*. Which of them will love most? Are we to conclude from hence, as at first sight might seem, that there is any advantage in having multiplied transgressions? that, the wider a man has wandered from God, the nearer, if he be brought back at all, he will cleave to him afterward, — the more sin, the more love? To understand the passage thus, would it not be to affirm a moral contradiction? But the whole matter is clear, if we consider the debt, not as an objective but a subjective debt, — not as so many outward transgressions and outbreaks of evil, but as so much conscience of sin. Often they who have least of what the world can call sin, or rather crime (for the world knows nothing of sin), have yet the deepest sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and there

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly¹ judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house,

thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

¹ Ps. 116: 16-18. 1 Cor. 15: 9. 2 Cor. 5: 14. 1 Tim. 1: 13-16.

fore, as they have most groaned under the evil, are the most thankful for the fact of a redemption, for the gift of a Redeemer. But he who has little forgiven is not necessarily he who has sinned little, but he who is lacking in any strong conviction of the exceeding evil of sin; who has never learned to take home his sin to himself. He loves little, or scarcely at all, because he has little sense of a deliverance wrought for him, and the glorious liberty of the children of God. — *Trench*.

43. I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. "I imagine," he said, — there is a touch of supercilious patronage, of surprised indifference to the whole matter, in the word he uses, — "I presume that he to whom he forgave most." Thou hast rightly judged. And then — the *sterner* for its very gentleness and forbearance — came the moral and application of the little tale. Though Simon may not have seen the point of the parable, perhaps the penitent, with the quicker intuition of a contrite heart, *had* seen it. — *Farrar*.

44. And he turned to the woman. What must have been her emotion when he who hitherto had not noticed her now turned full towards her, and calling the attention of all who were present to her shrinking figure as she sat upon the ground, hiding with her two hands and with her dishevelled hair the confusion of her face, exclaimed to the astonished Pharisee, "Simon, dost thou mark this woman?" — *Farrar*. It may be asked, "How did she gain access to the house? and especially how to the dining-room?" It was counted a piece of hospitality, that access to a house should be unusually free when an entertainment was given; and, in fact, many repaired to houses on such occasions, to behold the feast, in the hope either of getting a reward by contributing, through some accomplishment, to the satisfaction of the guests, or of obtaining a share of the victuals, for nothing was reserved from such entertainments. Thus, from one cause and another, there were always many people hanging about the court, and the outer parts of the guest-chamber, which was wholly open in front. A door is a great hinderance to admission into a room; and, where that does not exist, people easily slip in. — *Kitto*. No water for my feet. In order that the mats or carpets which are hallowed by domestic prayer may not be rendered unclean by any pollution of the streets, each guest, as he enters a house in Syria or Palestine, takes off his sandals, and leaves them at the door. He then proceeds to his place at the table. — *Farrar*. Washed my feet. In the time of our Lord the Jews, like the Greeks and Romans, reclined at banquets, upon couches placed round tables of much the same height as those now in use. The beautiful and profoundly moving incident which occurred in Simon's house can only be understood by remembering, that, as the guests lay on the couches which surrounded the tables, their feet would be turned towards any spectators who were standing outside the circle of bidden guests. — *Farrar*. Tears. "The blood of her heart," as Augustine calls them. Wiped with the hairs of her head. In the hair is the glory of the woman (1 Cor. 11: 15), long beautiful tresses having evermore been held as her chiefest adornment; they are in the human person highest in place and in honor, — while on the contrary the feet are lowest in both. What, then, was this service, but the outward expression, and incorporation in an act, of the inward truth, that the highest and chiefest of man's honor and glory and beauty were lower and meaner than the lowest that pertained to the Son of God; that they only found their true place when acknowledging their subjection and doing service to him? What brought this woman with the alabaster box of ointment to Jesus was the earnest yearning after the forgiveness of her sins; and she, in her deep shame and abasement of soul before him, presumed not to approach him nearer than to anoint his feet only, standing the while behind him. — *Trench*.

45. No kiss. The kiss was a token of affection, or a very common mode of salutation; and Simon had even neglected this mark of welcoming him to his house. It was often used among *men* as a sign of salutation. Compare Gen. 33: 4. Exod. 18: 7. Matt. 28: 49. Hath not ceased to kiss my feet. How striking the difference between the conduct of Simon and this woman! Simon, with all the richness of a splendid preparation, had omitted the common marks of regard and affection. *She*, in humility, had bowed at his feet, had watered them with tears, and had not ceased to kiss them. — *Barnes*. Among the Greeks the salutation was sometimes given by

46 My¹ head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are for-

given; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same loveth little.*

48 And he said unto her, *Thy sins are forgiven.*

¹ Ps. 23: 5.

embracing with arms around; but the most common salutation was by the conjuncture of their right hands, the right hand being reckoned a pledge of fidelity and friendship. Sometimes they kissed the lips, hands, knees, or feet, as the person deserved more or less respect. The Jews welcomed a stranger to their house in the same way. — *Parson.*

46. My head with oil thou didst not anoint. The custom of pouring oil upon the head was universal among the Jews. The oil used was sweet-oil, or oil of olives, prepared in such a way as to give an agreeable smell. It was also used to render the hair more smooth and elegant. See Ruth 3: 3. 2 Sam. 12: 20; xiv, 2. Ps. 23: 5. — *Barnes.* With ointment. This ointment was a mixture of various aromatics, and was therefore far more costly and precious than the oil commonly used for anointing the head. Her conduct, compared with that of Simon, was therefore more striking. He did not give even the common oil for his head, used on such occasions: she had applied to his feet a far more precious and valuable unguent. He, therefore, showed comparatively little love: she showed much. — *Barnes.* Observe the contrasts here: *water, tears; no kiss (on the face), eagerly kissing my feet; with oil my head,—my feet with ointment (which was more precious).—Alford.*

47. Wherefore . . . her sins . . . are forgiven. Our Lord, who admitted how much more she owed than the Pharisee, now proclaims in naked terms the forgiveness of her guilt. For; not because, as if love were the cause of forgiveness, but "inasmuch as," or "in proof of which." The latter clause of the verse, and the whole structure of the parable, plainly show this to be the meaning. — *J. F. and B.* There is an embarrassment, by all acknowledged, on the face of these words: first, how to bring them into agreement with the parable, for in that the debtor is said to love much because forgiven much, and not to be forgiven much because he loved much; and again how to bring them into agreement with the general doctrine of Scripture, which ever teaches that we love God because he first loved us,—that faith is the previous condition of forgiveness, and not love, which is not a condition at all, but a consequence. But the words, "*for she loved much,*" may best be explained by considering what the strong sorrow for sin, and the earnest desire after forgiveness, such as this woman displayed, mean, and from whence they arise; surely from this, from the deep feeling in the sinner's heart, that by his sins he has separated himself from that God who is Love, while yet he cannot do without his love; from the feeling that the heart must be again permitted to love him, must be again assured of his love toward it, else it will utterly wither and die. Sin unforgiven is felt to be the great barrier to this; and the desire after forgiveness—if it be not a mere selfish desire after personal safety, in which case it can be nothing before God—is the desire for the removal of this barrier, that so the heart may be free to love and to know itself beloved again. This desire then is itself love at its negative pole, not as yet made positive. It is the flower of love desiring to bud and bloom, but not daring and not able to put itself forth in the chilling atmosphere of the anger of God,—but which will do so at once when to the stern winter of God's anger, the genial spring of his love succeeds. In this sense that woman "*loved much:*" all her conduct proved the intense yearning of her heart after a reconciliation with a God of love, from whom she had alienated herself by her sins; all her tears and her services witnessed how much she desired to be permitted to love him and to know herself beloved of him; and on account of this her love, which, in fact, was faith (see verse 50, "*Thy faith hath saved thee*"), she obtained forgiveness of her sins. — *Trench.* To whom little is forgiven. He in whose view the sin forgiven him is little—who has had slight sense of his sin, or who has such narrow, restricted views of the pardon as to belittle it—"loveth little." And the faintness of his love shows this defective character of the other exercises. — *Jacobus.*

48. Thy sins are forgiven. This sense of the miserable emptiness of the creature, with the conviction that in God there is fullness of grace and blessing, and that he is willing to impart of this fullness to all who bring the empty vessel of the heart to be filled by him,—this, call it faith, or initiatory love, is what alone makes man receptive of any divine gift: this is what that Pharisee, in his legal righteousness, in his self-sufficiency and pride, had scarcely at all; and therefore he derived little or no good from communion with Christ. But that woman had it in large measure; and therefore she bore away the largest and best blessing which the Sea of God had to bestow,

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who¹ is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman,¹ Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

¹ Matt. 9: 2, 3. Mark 2: 7. ² ch. 8: 48; 18: 42. Hab. 2, 4. Matt. 9: 22. Mark 5: 34, 10: 52. Eph. 2: 8.

even the forgiveness of her sins; to her those blessed words were spoken, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace;" and in her it was proved true that, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." — *Trench.*

49. Who is this that forgiveth sins also? No wonder they were startled to hear one who was reclining at the same couch, and partaking of the same hospitalities with themselves, assume the awful prerogative of "even forgiving sins." But so far from receding from this claim, or softening it down, our Lord only repeats it, with two precious additions: one, announcing what was the one secret of the "forgiveness" she had experienced, and which carried "salvation" in its bosom; the other, a glorious dismissal of her in that "peace" which she had already felt, but is now assured she has his full warrant to enjoy. — *J. K. and B.*

50. Thy faith hath saved thee. Let it be observed that it is not said, "Thy love hath saved thee." Here, as in every other part of the New Testament, faith is put forward as the key to salvation. — *Ryle.*

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. An Eastern story. There is a story in the *Bustan* of the famous Persian poet Saadi, which seems an echo of this evangelical history. Jesus, while on earth, was once entertained in the cell of a dervish, or monk, of eminent reputation for sanctity. In the same city dwelt a youth, sunk in every sin, "whose heart was so black that Satan himself shrank back from it in horror." This last presently appeared before the cell of the monk, and, as if smitten by the very presence of the divine prophet, began to lament deeply the sin and misery of his life past, and, shedding abundant tears, to implore pardon and grace. The monk indignantly interrupted him, demanding how he dared to appear in his presence, and in that of God's holy prophet; assured him that for him it was in vain to seek forgiveness; and, to prove how inexorably he considered his lot was fixed for hell, exclaimed, "My God, grant me but one thing,—that I may stand far from this man in the judgment day!" On this Jesus spoke: "It shall be even so; the prayer of both is granted. This sinner has sought mercy and grace, and has not sought them in vain. His sins are forgiven: his place shall be in Paradise at the last day. But this monk has prayed that he may never stand near this sinner. His prayer, too, is granted: hell shall be his place; for there this sinner shall never come." — *Trench.*

II. Her sins, which are many, are forgiven. A kind Christian man, who had realized in his own heart the forgiving love of God through simply believing God's word, and who, because he was forgiven, loved much, found, in one of his visits of mercy, a young female about twenty years of age, living in sin, and wretched beyond all description. He soon learned her history. She had left her home some months before, had fallen into sin, and ever since had been sinking lower and lower in guilt. "Oh," she exclaimed with bitter grief, "that I were at home once more! But my father will not receive me. I am sure that he will not. He cannot love me now. He will never forgive me. I am confident he must always hate and despise me. I have lost his affection forever." — "Have you ever tried him?" inquired this Christian friend. "No, I dare not." — "Does your father know where you are?" — "No: I have never written to him since I left home." — "Then I will write to him at once." — "It is of no use, sir, no use." — "Well, we shall see about that. We can but try." A letter was accordingly written, and well prayed over. By return of post, such an answer came back as made the good man rejoice, and the wanderer weep abundantly. "Immediate," was written large on the outside; and the substance of the epistle was, "ready to forgive." "This," said the father, "is what I have been earnestly praying for. I have longed to know where my wanderer was, and yearned to hear that she was willing to return. Let her come back at once. I will forgive all, and love her still." Now, observe that the readiness of this father to forgive his child, and to receive her again, was a fact before the letter was written, — a fact all the time she thought so hardly of her father, and judged his heart by her own deservings. — *Sunday at Home.*

III. Walking along the street, how many children do you see all covered with filth and dirt, while water is so plentiful, and oftentimes so near at hand! Yet there they are. They seem happy in their dirt; they have no wish to be clean. Could we look into the hearts of many, how close a correspondence should we find to the bodies of these children! And yet within their reach the

means of cleansing is provided, the fountain opened: they have only to wash and be clear. The reason of their position is a very sad one,—they have no desire after salvation. — *W. H. W. in Biblical Treasury.*

PRACTICAL.

1. Men may have some outward respect for Christ, and yet remain unconverted.
2. It is quite possible to have a decent form of religion, and yet know nothing of the gospel of Christ.
3. Cold and selfish hypocrisy is in the sight of God as hateful as more glaring sin; the lesson that a life of sinful and impenitent respectability may be no less deadly and dangerous than a life of open shame. — *Farrar.*
4. Jesus teaches us how to deal with the fallen; how gently and pointedly to rebuke those in error.
5. Sin is a debt, and sinners are debtors to God. Be it more or less, it is more than we are able to pay.
6. The self-righteous are made to be witnesses against themselves.
7. We should give our most precious things to Christ. Our best is unworthy of his least mercies.
8. A sense of forgiven sin is one mainspring and the life-blood of love to Christ. — *Ryle.*
9. The consciousness of sin is no measure of the sin. The greatest sinners are usually the least conscious of guilt.
10. Grateful love is the secret of doing much for Christ.
11. Faith the source of salvation.
12. Love the fruit and proof of salvation, peace its fragrant blossom.

LESSON IX. — SEPTEMBER 1, 1878.

THE RETURN OF THE SEVENTY. — LUKE 10: 17-24.

TIME. A.D. 29; autumn, about the time of the feast of tabernacles, Oct. 11.

PLACE. The seventy were sent out from Capernaum. Their mission was either in Samaria (Smith), or Judaea and valley of Jordan in Perea (Robinson); and the return was probably near Jerusalem.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judaea; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

INTRODUCTION.

After 18 months of ministry in Galilee without a visit to Jerusalem, Jesus went down to the feast of tabernacles, taking the route by the way of Samaria. It was on this journey that James and John expressed the wish that fire might be called down from heaven to consume the inhospitable Samaritans (Luke 9: 51-62). He left, indeed, some faithful hearts behind him; but how few! Galilee had rejected him, as Judaea had rejected him. On one side of the lake which he loved, a whole populace in unanimous deputation had besought him to depart out of their coasts; on the other, they had vainly tried to vex his last days among them by a miserable conspiracy to frighten him into flight. At Nazareth, the sweet mountain village of his childish days, — at Nazareth, with all its happy memories of his boyhood and his mother's home, — they had treated him with such violence and outrage that he could not visit it again. And even at Chorazin and Capernaum and Bethsaida, on those Eden-shores of the silver lake, in the green, delicious plain, whose every field he had traversed with his apostles, performing deeds of mercy, and uttering words of love, — even there they loved the whited sepulchres of a Pharisaic sanctity, and the shallow traditions of a Levitical ceremonial, better than the light and the life which had been offered them by the Son of God. And therefore, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" and unto thee, Capernaum, "his own city," a yet deeper woe. With such thoughts in his heart, and such words on his lips, he started forth from the scene of his rejected ministry; and on all this land, and most of all on that region of it, the woe has fallen. — *Farrar.* During his progress through Samaria, he sent forth seventy disciples, two and two, to go before him, preaching the gospel in every place that he designed to visit. This differed in several points from the previous commission of the apostles. The number of the seventy, and the scene of their mission (Samaria),

allike indicated that the time was at hand for preaching the gospel to the heathen; whereas the number of the apostles corresponded to the twelve tribes of Israel, to whom their commission also restricted them nor had the seventy received the special training of the twelve. Some have also seen a significance in the sending forth of the twelve at the season of the passover, the beginning of the harvest, and of the seventy at the time of the feast of tabernacles, the end of all the labors of the year. In other respects their instructions were the same; and they may be regarded as in spirit those which should ever guide Christ's ministers. — *Smith*. Luke alone records this appointing of the seventy.

17 ¶ And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

18 And he said unto them, I be-

held Satan¹ as lightning fall from heaven.

19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents² and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy :

¹ Rev. 12: 8, 9. ² Mark 16: 18. Acts 28: 5.

EXPLANATORY.

17. **And the seventy returned again.** Read verses 1-16. The number 70 might perhaps have reference to the *seventy elders* of Israel (Exod. 24: 1. Num. 9: 16). All sorts of fanciful analogies have been found out and insisted on (and, moreover, forced into the text), which are not worth recounting. — *Alford*. The mission, unlike that of the twelve, was evidently quite *temporary*. All the instructions are in keeping with a brief and hasty *pioneering* mission, intended to supply what of general preparation for coming events the Lord's own visit afterward to the same "cities and places" (verse 1) would not, from want of time, now suffice to accomplish; whereas the instructions to the twelve, besides embracing all those to the seventy, contemplate *world-wide* and *permanent* effects. Accordingly, after their return from this single missionary tour, we never again read of the seventy. — *J. F. and B.* With joy. Not a solitary trace of the permanent gain which they brought to the kingdom of God has been preserved to us; yet a single hint is given of the momentary impression which they elicited, — "even the demons," &c. To their eye every other fruit of their labors recedes before this recollection. If we consider that a command to cast out demons had not been expressly given them, and that this attempt a little before had failed even when made by nine apostles (ch. 9: 37), we can still better understand this joy of the seventy, and must at the same time entertain the most favorable ideas of their courage and of their strength of faith. Their righteous joy is in the answer of the Saviour confirmed, augmented, and sanctified. — *Van Oosterzee*. Even the devils; rather *demons*, which in Greek is properly a different word from *devil*. The word *devil* is seldom used in the original in the plural, and commonly signifies Satan the prince; while all the inferior evil spirits are *δαίμονια*, *demons*. — *Whedon*. In thy name. It is by our act, but in thy name; ours is the joy, but thine the glory. Hence, though our Lord cautioned them, he did not condemn their joy. — *Whedon*.

18. **I beheld Satan.** We may understand these words in two ways: (1) we may say that in this brief speech our Lord sums up by *anticipation*, as so often in the discourses in John, the whole great conflict with and defeat of the power of evil from the first, even till accomplished by his own victory. The words, "*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*," refer to the original fall of Satan, when he lost his place as an angel of light, not keeping his first estate; which fall, however, had been proceeding ever since, step by step, and shall do so till all things be put under the feet of Jesus, who was made lower than the angels. And this "*I beheld*" belongs to the period before the foundation of the world, when he abode in the bosom of the Father. He is to be (see verse 22) the great victor over the adversary; and this victory began when Satan fell from heaven. At the same time it may be doubted whether it is not (2) grammatically more correct to refer the imperfect tense, *I beheld*, was *beholding*, to the time just past, to the Lord's prophetic sight at the time of the ministering of the seventy. If this view be correct, the words do not refer to any "*triumph just gained*," but to the Lord's glorious anticipations of final triumph, felt during the exercise of power by his servants. — *Alford*. As lightning. (See Zech. 9: 14.) This expresses not only the suddenness of his fall, but the fact that he was an angel of light. — *Jacobus*. From heaven. (See Isa. 14: 9-15. Rev. 12: 7-12.) From his high position as seeming ruler over the world, as lightning falls from the sky.

19. **Behold, I give.** The perfect tense, *I have given*. The Greek perfect signifies a past act whose effect remains. *I have given*, and the gift still remains. The gift was imparted in the first bestowment of their symbolical office, as one of its significant points. It was probably to cease with their office, though this may not be so certain. The same promise was made even to private believers

and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written¹ in heaven.

21 ¶ In that hour Jesus rejoiced

in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: ever so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

¹ Exod. 32: 32. Ps. 69: 28. Isa. 4: 3. Dan. 12: 1. Phil. 4: 3. Heb. 12: 23. Rev. 13: 8; 20: 12; 21: 27.

In Mark 16: 18. — *Whedon*. Power to tread on serpents and scorpions. And as the casting-out of demons by the seventy, and the fall of Satan which Christ saw, were both actual and physical realities, so was this *treading on serpents and scorpions* an actual and physical reality. The seventy, during their mission, should find a superiority to reptile-venom one of their miraculous gifts, as did Paul at Melita (Acts 28: 5). But all three of these realities were symbols of the spiritual. They were the type of the final *bruising of the serpent's head*. — *Whedon*. Though the miracle-working power remained in the church after the ascension of our Lord, Christianity was made less dependent on such external signs and tokens, and more and more on the moral and spiritual power of the word itself. With this promise compare the still more general one of Ps. 91. Such signs as are indicated here are not needed in this age, when the divine nature of Christianity is witnessed by such historical evidences as are afforded by the moral, the religious, the social, the political, and even the commercial, development which has everywhere attended on and resulted from its progress. I can hardly conceive that occasion ever can arise for the further fulfilment of this promise. Christianity is itself a greater sign than any the apostles wrought. — *Abbott*. The enemy. The chief and first old serpent; the Satan of verse 18, by whose first hostility all other venomous things are poisonous to man. — *Whedon*. Nothing hurt you. Nothing should really harm them. The troubles he permitted should all work together for their good; so that the time will come when they will thank God for these now seeming evils, because they have not harmed but blessed them. — *Barnes*.

20. In this rejoice not. Here he cautions them, that, having such distinguished powers, they should not make these their chief rejoicing. They would be tempted so to do. Spiritual pride is to be guarded against. We are not to boast of our gifts and graces. — *Jacobus*. But rather. This is the proper ground of joy, that we have salvation through Christ, and are heirs of heaven. This we may rejoice in without miraculous gifts; and this is ground of permanent rejoicing to every child of God. This should make death welcome. — *Jacobus*. He guarded them against that special danger which even now attends those who look for miraculous cures of faith; viz., of drawing attention to miracles and the body, away from the spiritual good of ourselves and others. — *Jacobus*. Your names written. The seventy knew undoubtedly, as we also do, the beautiful figure of the Old Testament, which depicts to us the Eternal One with a book before his face, wherein he notes down the names and deeds of his faithful servants (Exod. 32: 32, 33. Mal. 3: 16. Compare Rev. 3: 5). — *Van Oosterzee*. In heaven. It was the ancient custom that citizens in any commonwealth should be enrolled in a book; and, when any were admitted to the rights of citizenship, their names were registered on this list. They were to rejoice that they were enrolled as citizens of heaven. — *Jacobus*.

21. I thank thee, &c. The very same sublime words were uttered by our Lord on a former similar occasion (Matt. 11: 25-27). Rejoiced. — "Rejoice" is too weak a word. It is "exulted in spirit," — evidently giving visible expression to his unusual emotions, while, at the same time, the words "in spirit" are meant to convey to the reader the *depth* of them. — *J. F. and B.* Thou hast hid. What are we to understand by this, — that God has hidden these things from the wise and prudent? Without doubt we have here to understand a direct, yet at the same time a holy, wise, and loving disposition of things by the Father, one which is thoroughly grounded in the nature of things. To the haughty man it is morally impossible to bow before Christ. God has connected the participation in his kingdom with a condition which lay within the reach even of the most simple; namely, lowliness and humility of heart. Wise and prudent men wantonly made themselves un-receptive of this blessing. It is not for this hiding in and of itself, however deserved it may be, that our Lord gives thanks, but for this, that, even if these things were hidden to the wise, they did not remain concealed for all. — *Van Oosterzee*. These things. From the next verse we gather that the things revealed to them were the nature and mission of Christ and the love of the Father; an insight into God's plan of redemption and mercy to men, as shown in their success in healing the sick and casting out devils. Though wise men failed to see in Jesus any thing but a poor man,

22 All things¹ are delivered to me of my Father: and no² man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and *he* to whom the Son will reveal *him*.

23 ¶ And he turned him unto *his* disciples, and said privately, Blessed

are the eyes which see the things that ye see:

24 For I tell you, that³ many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

¹ Matt. 28: 18. John 3: 35. ² John 6: 44, 46. ³ 1 Pet. 1: 10.

the seventy saw him as the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. From the wise and prudent. The wise in philosophy, the prudent in worldly affairs. Observe that the contrast is not with the unwise and imprudent, but with *babes*. The doctrine conveyed is that religious truth is *not acquired by any mere intellectual process, however good in itself*; it is revealed not to philosophical wisdom or intellectual culture, or practical sagacity in affairs, but to childlike humility and docility. — *Abbott*. For ages the great hinderance to progress in knowledge and science was a self-conscious wisdom that would teach nature. As soon as men took the childlike course of trying to find out what nature did and was, then science bloomed out into its new and wonderful life. It is the same spirit only, by which men can arrive at the knowledge of God and the blessings of religion. — To *babes*. To the poor, ignorant, and obscure; the teachable, simple, and humble, — such as his disciples were. — *Barnes*.

22. All things are delivered to me of my Father. The same doctrine is clearly taught often in the New Testament. See John 3: 35; 6: 46; 10: 15. Col. 1: 16, 17. It means that Christ has control over all things, for the good of his Church; that the government of the universe is committed to him as *Mediator*, that he may redeem his people, and guide them to glory (Eph. 1: 20, 21, 22). — *Barnes*. No man knoweth who the Son is. That is, such is the nature of the Son of God, such the mystery of the union between the divine and human nature, such his exalted character as *divine*, that no mortal can fully comprehend him. None but God *fully* knows him. — *Barnes*. This is one of the most convincing testimonies for the true Godhead of Christ. One who was only a created spirit, or an immaculate man, could not possibly, without blasphemy against God, testify this of himself. — *Van Oosterzee*. Who the Father is, but the Son, &c. No man knows the Father except he add to the knowledge gained from other sources, that special knowledge of God's grace and love which the Son affords, nor unless his study of nature, &c., is under the direction of and in submission to the Son. Philosophy is in so far right that, to the Christless, God is the Unknowable. For the way in which the Son reveals the Father, and to whom he will reveal him, see John 14: 15-24. — *Abbott*.

23. Unto his disciples — privately. Because they alone really saw the things of which he spoke. Their eyes were beginning to be opened. The others would have felt no blessedness. Blessed are the eyes which see the things That ye see. "Happy ye, whose eyes and ears, voluntarily and gladly opened, are drinking in the light divine." — *J. F. and B.*

24. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see. Favored above the most honored and the best that lived under the old economy, who had but glimpses of the things of the new kingdom, just sufficient to kindle in them desires not to be fulfilled to any in their day (Matt. 13: 16, 17). — *J. F. and B.* One of the sublimest utterances of our Lord. He proclaims himself as Him in whom alone not only the expectation of the earlier time is fulfilled, but in whom also the ornament and crown of mankind has appeared. — *Van Oosterzee*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. The shock that buried Lisbon in 1755 never ceased to vibrate till it reached the wilds of Scotland, and the vineyards of Madeira. It was felt among the islands of the Grecian Archipelago, and it changed the level of the solitary lakes that sleep beneath the shadows of the North Alps. Even so the shock that Satan's kingdom sustained when Christianity was established will not cease to vibrate till it move the whole world. — *Christ and other Masters*.

II. Hid from the wise. "The wise man is but a clever infant, spelling letters from a hieroglyphical prophetic book, the lexicon of which lies in eternity." — *Carlyle*.

III. No man knoweth, &c. "How can man understand God, since he does not yet understand his own mind, with which he endeavors to understand Him?" — *Augustine*.

IV. Blessed are the eyes which see. We know that the bunch of grapes which the spies

of the children of Israel brought from the land of promise was carried by two men on a pole. Luther has a curious remark on this: he observes that the man who went foremost could not see the grapes, but that the man who bore the hindmost part of the pole had the grapes continually in view, and might pluck them if he pleased. Thus, he says, the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament, who went before the apostles, did not see distinctly the bunch of grapes (meaning thereby the blessings of the gospel); but that those who came after them, namely, the evangelists and apostles, and all that have lived in the light of the New Testament dispensation, have seen them clearly; and, if they did not taste them, it was their own fault. — *Illustrative Gleanings* (in "Christ in Literature").

V. Prophets and kings have desired to see. Socrates uttered the longing of all thoughtful heathen. "We must wait," said he, "till One shall come and teach us our duty to God." The Cumean sibyl taught that a great ruler should be born, of heavenly extraction, whose reign would be universal; "to give a universal peace, and exercise his Father's virtues; to abolish all violence, and restore original simplicity; to kill the serpent, and purge all vegetables of poison. The blessings would extend to the brute creation." Thus unconsciously did the heathen world prophesy of and long for the Redeemer. — *Van Doren*.

PRACTICAL.

1. Tell Jesus all about your life.
2. (Verse 17.) "Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."
3. (Verse 18.) However exalted in power or position evil may seem, it will fall from that heaven before the power of Jesus.
4. The present great progress of Christ's kingdom, the promise of its complete triumph.
5. (Verse 19.) Nought can harm him who harms not himself. — *Van Oosterzee*.
6. All things are the Christian's possession. His Saviour rules all things; and therefore nothing can harm the disciple.
7. Appetites, passions, temptations, things worse than serpents, are made subject to the Christian.
8. If wicked men be as *serpents*, and you dwell among those scorpions, you may despise their rage. They have no power against you, but what is given them from above. — *Henry*.
9. (Verse 20.) Our rejoicing should not be in any outward deeds or wonders, but in a character and a love that fits us for heaven.
10. (Verse 21.) False, self-conceited wisdom shuts out the true light. The childlike spirit toward God and nature is the door to wisdom and knowledge and goodness.
11. (Verse 22.) The comfort of loving and trusting a Saviour who holds all power, and controls all things.
12. The best of all knowledge is the knowledge of God and Christ.
13. (Verse 23.) We are "heirs of all the ages:" what others worked for, prayed for, hoped for, that we are blessed in seeing and enjoying.

LESSON X. — SEPTEMBER 8, 1878.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN. — LUKE 10: 30-37.

TIME. A.D. 29; autumn, near the time of the feast of tabernacles.

PLACE. Probably near Jerusalem.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome (16th year); Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa (4th year); Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee (33d year).

INTRODUCTION.

It was probably while on his journey through Samaria, on the way to Jerusalem, that a lawyer or scribe came to Jesus, asking him the question, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? It was in answer to this question that Jesus spoke the parable of the lesson. A similar occurrence is related by Matt. 22: 37-40, and Mark 12: 28-34. But the one related by Luke is probably not the same. The lawyer did not ask the question as a sincere inquirer after truth, but in order to make

some objection to prove the skill of "this famous Galilean teacher." Jesus, seeing through the evil motive of his question, simply asked him what was the answer to that question which was given in the law which it was the very object of the man's life to teach and to explain. The lawyer gave the best summary which the best teaching of his nation had by this time rendered prevalent. Jesus simply confirmed his answer, and said, "This do, and thou shalt live." But wanting something more than this, and anxious to justify a question which from his own point of view was superfluous, the lawyer thought to cover his retreat by the fresh question, "And who is my neighbor?" Had Jesus asked the man's own opinion on this question, he well knew how narrow and false it would have been; he therefore answered it himself, or rather gave to the lawyer the means for answering it, by one of his most striking parables. — *Farrar*.

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by¹ on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and

¹ Ps. 38: 11.

EXPLANATORY.

30. A certain man (one of the Jews) went down from Jerusalem. From the heights of the mountains upon which Jerusalem was built, to the vale of the Jordan in which Jericho stood (18 miles distant), is almost a constant descent. This man, we may suppose, takes the usual route. Starting from what is now St. Stephen's gate, through the eastern wall of Jerusalem, he crosses the garden and the southern slopes of the Mount of Olives to Bethany. Thence he proceeds through the road, once the channel of a stream and now a deep ravine; and at about ten miles from the city he enters that gloomy road through the desert wilderness called by St. Jerome *the bloody way*, and which from that time to the present has been the haunt of Arab and other robbers. — *Whedon*. To Jericho. Should the traveller have escaped unharmed, as the priest and Levite did, in due time there would open before him in rare beauty the plains of Jericho and the distant towers of *that city of palms*. It had been lately raised to its highest pitch of splendor by Herod the Great, who here built a favorite palace. — *Whedon*. Fell among thieves (robbers). If we might conceive the ocean as being suddenly congealed when its waves are tossed mountain-high and pitching in wild confusion against each other, we should then have some idea of the scene of the desert in which the Saviour has placed so truthful a parable as that of the Good Samaritan. The ravines, the almost inaccessible cliffs, the caverns, furnish admirable lurking-places for robbers; they can rush forth upon their victims unexpectedly, and escape as soon almost beyond the possibility of pursuit. — *Hackett*. It is very common at the present day for travellers to be robbed and even murdered here. Stripped him of his raiment. Those among whom he fell did their best to maintain the infamous character of the spot; for they "stripped him of his raiment," and because, perhaps, he made some slight resistance as they were spoiling him, or out of mere wantonness of cruelty, "wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead." — *Trench*.

31. By chance. The original would justify us in saying rather "by coincidence" than "by chance," by that wonderful falling-in of one event with another, which often indeed seems to men but chance, yet is indeed of the fine weaving-in, by God's providence, of the threads of different men's lives into one common woof. He brings the negative pole of one man's need into contact with the positive of another man's power of help; one man's emptiness into relation with another's fullness. Many of our summonses to acts of love are of this kind; and they are those perhaps which we are most in danger of missing, through a failing to see in them this finger of God. — *Trench*. A certain priest. It is well known that at Jericho many priests had their abode, who, when their turn came, discharged the service of the sanctuary at Jerusalem. Commonly they appear to have chosen the longer but safer road by Bethlehem, so that it was an exception when they travelled through the wilderness. It here brings into so much the more striking light their want of feeling, that the two do not pass on without first having come nearer, and more or less exactly taking note of the state of the case. This, however, merely persuades them of the greatness of the danger that awaits them also if they delay even for an instant; and therefore they make haste to quit the way as blood as quickly as possible. — *Van Oosterzee*.

32. Likewise a Levite. This was a class who served at the temple, assisting the priests in

looked ¹ on him, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan,² as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion ³ on him,

34 And went to him, and bound ⁴ up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay ⁵ thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?

¹ Ps. 109: 25. Prov. 27: 10. ² John 4: 9. ³ Exod. 2: 6. ⁴ Ps. 147: 3. Isa. 1: 6. ⁵ ch. 14: 14. Prov. 19: 17.

the sacrifices and other services. They belonged to the tribe of Levi, which was set apart to religion (Num. 8: 5-22). In his case there was an additional aggravation; for he seems to have at least drawn nearer than the priest, and looked at the suffering condition of the man, and then coolly to have passed on his way.

33. A certain Samaritan. The Samaritans inhabited the central part of Palestine. The Samaritan was exposed to at least the same danger as those that had passed before him; but he took not counsel of these selfish fears, for, when he saw the wounded and bleeding man, "*he had compassion on him.*" While the priest and Levite—marked out as those who should have been foremost in showing pity and exercising mercy—were forgetful of the commonest duties of humanity, it was left to the excommunicated Samaritan, whose very name was a byword of contempt among the Jews, and synonymous with heretic (John 8: 48), to show what love was; and this not, as was required of them, to a fellow-countryman, but to one of an alien and hostile race,—one of a people that had no dealings with his people, that anathematized them; even as, no doubt, all the influences with which he had been surrounded from his youth, would have led him, as far as he yielded to them, to repay hate with hate, and insult with insult, and wrong with wrong. For if the Jew called the Samaritan a Cuthite,—an idolater who worshipped the image of a dove,—and cursed him publicly in his synagogue, and prayed that he might have no portion in the resurrection of life, that to eat a morsel of his fare was as eating swine's flesh, and would rather suffer any need than to be beholden to him for the smallest office of charity, the Samaritan was not behindhand in cursing nor in active demonstrations of enmity and ill-will.—*Trench. Had compassion.* This compassion, as the best thing he gave, is mentioned first.—*Trench.*

34. Bound up his wounds. Exceedingly touching is here the minuteness with which all the details of his tender care towards the poor and unknown stranger, of whom all he knew was that he belonged to a nation bitterly hostile to his own, are given. He "bound up his wounds," no doubt, with strips torn from his own garments. Oil and wine. See Isa. 1: 6. This was a well-known method of cure in the East. Greek and Latin physicians commended it.—*Jacobus.* A note in Schoettgen throws light on this expression. He says, "Some one might naturally ask whence this traveller got his oil and wine on a journey? It has occurred to me that travellers in hot Eastern countries made a point of carrying oil with them, that they might anoint and strengthen their limbs wearied with continued heat. We have an example in the case of Jacob, who, even when he slept on the bare ground in Bethel, and journeyed alone with only a staff, nevertheless had oil with him, with which he anointed the stone, and oil which he poured out to the glory of God" (Gen. 28: 18).—*Ryle.* The wine was poured in to cleanse the wound, and the oil to assuage the smart. They were highly esteemed remedies. Set him on his own beast. His care of the wounded man must have consumed considerable time; but, after he had ministered to his wants, he does not leave him alone, thinking he had done enough, but puts him upon his own beast, and takes him to an inn. This was the greatest magnanimity, and so much more than common kindness required. Real love does not ask *how little*, but *how much*, it may do.—*Jacobus.* To an inn. This is the only place where an inn, as we understand the word, a house for the reception of travellers, kept by a host, as distinguished from an empty caravansary, is mentioned. Bleek remarks that this serves to show that there were such inns in that neighborhood, though certainly they were not frequent.—*Alford.*

35. Two pence. About 30 cents; but equal to two days' wages of a laboring man,—enough for several days' support.

37 And he said, He that showed mercy¹ on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

¹ Prov. 14: 21. Hos. 6: 6. Mic. 6: 8. Matt. 23: 23.

36. Which . . . was neighbor? A most dexterous way of putting the question: (1) Turning the question from, "Whom am I to love as my neighbor?" to, "Who is the man that shows that love?" (2) Compelling the lawyer to give a reply very different from what he would like, — not only condemning his own nation, but those of them who should be the most exemplary. (3) Making him commend one of a deeply-hated race. And he does it, but it is almost extorted. For he does not answer, "The Samaritan," — that would have sounded heterodox, heretical, — but, "He that showed mercy on him." It comes to the same thing, no doubt, but the circumlocution is significant. — *J. F. and B.* The lawyer had asked, "Who is the neighbor to whom I am bound to show the service of love?" But the Lord asks, "Who is a neighbor; he who shows love, or he who shows it not?" for herein lay the great lesson, that it is not the object which is to determine the love, but that love has its own measure in itself: it is like the sun, which does not ask on what it shall shine or what it shall warm, but shines and warms by the very law of its own being, so that there is nothing hidden from its light and from its heat. The lawyer had said, "Declare to me my neighbor; what marks a man to be such? Is it one faith, one blood, the bonds of mutual benefits, or what else, that I may know to whom I owe this debt of love?" The Lord rebukes the question by holding up before him a man, and this a despised Samaritan, who, so far from asking that question, freely and largely exercised love towards one who certainly had none of the signs such as the lawyer conceived would mark out a neighbor in his sense of the word. The parable is a reply, not to the question, for to that it is no reply, but to the spirit out of which the question proceeded. It says, "You ask who is your neighbor. I will show you a man who asked not that question; and then your own heart shall be judge between you and him, which had most of the mind of God, which was most truly the doer of his will, the imitator of his perfections." — *Trench.*

37. Go . . . do likewise. What noble Christian institutions have not such words founded, all undreamed of till that wondrous One came to bless this heartless world of ours with his incomparable love, — first in words, and then in deeds which have translated his words into flesh and blood, and poured the life of them through that humanity which he made his own! — *J. F. and B.* Beautiful as is this parable when thus taken simply according to the letter, and full of incentives to active mercy and love, bidding us to "put on bowels of mercies," to be kind and tender-hearted; yet how much lovelier still, provoking how much more strongly still to love and good works, when, with most of the fathers of the Church, with many, too, of the reformers, we trace in it a deeper meaning still, and see the work of Christ, of the merciful Son of man himself, portrayed to us here! The lawyer naturally took, and was meant to take, the meaning which lay upon the surface; nor will the parable lose its value to us, as showing forth the pity and love of man to his fellow, because it also shadows forth the crowning act of mercy and love shown by the Son of man to the entire race. — *Trench.*

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. The Rev. J. R. Lelfchild narrates the following interesting fact concerning a local preacher in Cornwall, Thomas Samson by name. He was a working miner, engaged in the bowels of the earth every day of his life, and working hard for his bread. The captain of the mine said to him on one occasion, "Thomas, I've got an easier berth for you, where there is comparatively little to do, and where you can earn more money; will you accept it?" What do you think he said? "Captain, there's our poor brother Gregory; he has a sick body, and he is not able to work as hard as I am. I fear his toll will shorten his useful life. Will you let him have the berth?" The captain, pleased with his generosity, sent for Gregory, and gave him the berth, which he is now enjoying. Thomas was gratified, and added, "I can work a little longer yet." — *Sunday Magazine.*

II. The spirit of love to our neighbor is wonderfully exemplified in missions. Men before had travelled into foreign countries; the naturalist, to collect specimens; the historian, to accumulate facts; the philosopher, to live up wisdom, or else he had staid in his cell or grove to paint pictures of beautiful love. But the spectacle of an apostle Paul crossing oceans, not to conquer kingdoms, nor to live up knowledge, but to impart life; not to accumulate stores for self, but to give, and to spend himself, — was new in the history of the world. The celestial fire had touched the hearts of men, and their hearts flamed; and it caught and spread, and would not stop. On they went, that glorious band of brothers, in their strange enterprise, over oceans and through forests, penetrating into the dungeon and to the throne, to the hut of the savage feeding on human flesh, and to the shore lined with the skin-clad inhabitants of these far Isles of Britain. — *Robertson.*

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 30.) In this man we see a picture of humanity robbed of character and hope, stripped of righteousness, bruised and half dead, having fallen among the thieves of sin and Satan.
2. The Jericho road runs very near our own homes and places of business. Let us look out and see that none are passed by who have fallen among thieves.
3. (Verses 31, 32.) Like the priest and Levite, the law and philosophy pass by fallen man, and do not help him.
4. All who have time and money, and neglect the poor and needy in their vicinity, be they foreigners, black, Chinese, or whosoever they may, are like these two who passed by.
5. (Verse 33.) Jesus is the great typical "Good Samaritan," dying to save his enemies.
6. It is not place, but love, that makes neighborhood. Count all men as neighbors, and love them as thyself. — *Alford*.
7. Love to our neighbor assumes divers forms: (1) In a family it is tenderness and care; (2) in a neighborhood, courtesy; (3) in friendship, sympathy; (4) in business, integrity; (5) in distress, mercy; (6) to our country, patriotism; (7) to the world, benevolence; (8) to the Church, brotherly kindness.
8. This parable answers the objections to missions. Men complain that missionaries are sent far away while work is to be done at home, and is not done by those who make this objection. But whosoever we can reach with the gospel is our neighbor.
9. Love is self-denying. It was dangerous to stop on this road. Business called; but love did not stop helping, and walked while letting the wounded man ride.
10. (Verse 36.) God makes men witnesses against themselves.
11. How lovely is the spirit which the gospel enjoins and inspires! It includes all men within its kind regards, whatever be their external condition.
12. If we would have this genuine, extensive love to our neighbor, we must begin by having supreme love to God, and by conforming ourselves to his holy character. — *Bibley*.
13. What you praise, copy. — *J. Edwards*.

LESSON XI.—SEPTEMBER 15, 1878.

IMPORTUNITY IN PRAYER.—LUKE 11: 5-13.

TIME. A.D. fall of 29; Jesus nearly 33 years old; probably a few days after the last narrative.

PLACE. Near Jerusalem.

RULERS. Tiberius Caesar, emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

THE CONNECTION.

Jesus was engaged in solitary prayer, probably at early dawn. While they saw him standing there with his eyes uplifted to heaven, — for standing, not kneeling, was and is the common Oriental attitude in prayer, — the disciples remained at a reverent distance; but, when his orisons were over, they came to him with the natural entreaty that he would teach them to pray, as John also taught his disciples. He at once granted their request, and taught them that short and perfect petition which has thenceforth been the model on which all our best and most acceptable prayers are formed. Not less divine were the earnest and simple words which followed it, and which taught the disciples that men ought always to pray and not to faint; since, if importunity prevails over the selfishness of man, earnestness must be all-powerful with the righteousness of God. Jesus impressed upon them the lesson that if human affection can be trusted to give only useful and kindly gifts, the love of the great Father, who loves us all, will much more certainly give his best and highest gift — even the gift of the Holy Spirit — to all that ask him. — *Farrar*.

5 And he said unto them, Which of | unto him at midnight, and say unto
you shall have a friend, and shall go | him, Friend, lend me three loaves :

EXPLANATORY.

5. Which of you. The purpose is, as also in the parable of the unrighteous judge (ch. 18: 1-8), to encourage to perseverance in prayer. — *Van Oosterzee*. Perhaps there is this difference between

6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the

door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is

the two parables, that here it is intercessory prayer, prayer for the needs of others, and there for our own needs. — *Trench*. Shall have a friend . . . shall go unto him. We must come to God with boldness and confidence for what we need, as a man does to the house of his neighbor or friend, who he knows loves him, and is inclined to be kind to him. We must come for bread, for that which is needful and which we cannot be without. We must come for others as well as for ourselves. We cannot come on a more pleasing errand than when we come for grace to enable us to do good. We may come with the more boldness in a strait, if it be providential, and not the result of our own folly and carelessness. This man would not have wanted bread, if his friend had not come in unexpectedly. — *Henry*. At midnight. The very best time for travel in the heat of a tropical climate is during the night. The trumpet of the caravan sounds at that hour to call the slumbering travellers to awake and march. — *Whedon*. Lend me three loaves. We may conclude from this expression that a loaf of bread in the New Testament days was much smaller in size than it commonly is now. Three of our loaves would be more than sufficient for the wants of one man. This fact should be remembered, as it throws light on the miracle of feeding the multitudes with a few loaves. — *Ryle*. The loaf of the Orientals is a thin cake of barleycorn. The three would doubtless be one for his friend; one perhaps for himself, at least to break, as if participating for company's sake; and the third for courtesy, or for his friend if very hungry. — *Whedon*.

6. A friend of mine . . . I have nothing. This was prayer for another. Our Lord teaches us to pray for the world in wickedness, for our friends and for our enemies. We are not fully taught to pray, until we can intercede for others. There is every reason for seeking God's grace on behalf of our unconverted friends. We have no power to save them in their extremity; and we must go to God on their behalf. — *Jacobus*.

7. Trouble me not: the door is now shut. Evidently more than merely closed: he would say, "The door is fastened, barred, and bolted; the house is made up for the night; and at this unreasonable hour I cannot disturb my children, who are now with me in bed, by rising and giving thee." — *Trench*. My children are with me in bed. It is usual for a whole family to sleep in the same room, especially those in lower life, laying their beds on the ground. From these circumstances we learn the precise meaning of the reply. It signifies that they were all in bed in the same apartment, not in the same bed. — *Burder*.

8. Yet because of his importunity. The word rendered by "importunity" is too mild. It should be as in the margin, *shamelessness*; i.e., no shame can check or stop. — *Alford*. The applicant is supposed to have gone on knocking until the householder arose. The perseverance is insisted on, because it shows the earnestness. *Jacobus*. Though there is an aspect under which God may present himself to us similar to that of the unjust judge and this churlish neighbor, yet is there ever this difference, — that his is a seeming neglect and unwillingness to grant, theirs a real. (See Matt. 15: 21. Gen. 32: 28.) If selfish man can be won by importunate prayer to give, and unjust man to do right, much more certainly shall the bountiful Lord bestow, and the righteous Lord do justice. — *Trench*. The reason why God requires this importunity is not from his unwillingness to bestow, but by the importunity to make us fit to receive. The great difficulty with all God's gifts is on our part, to make us able and willing to receive. The gifts would be wasted on us, unless we had that appreciation and desire which made us importunate. We lose many prayers for the want of two things which support each other, — *specificness of object*, and *intensity of desire*. Let a man define to his own mind an object of prayer, and then let him be moved by desires for that object which impel him to pray, because he cannot otherwise satisfy the irrepressible longings of his soul; let him have such desires as shall lead him to search out and dwell upon, and treasure in his heart, and return to again, and appropriate to himself anew, the encouragements to prayer, till his Bible opens of itself to the right places; and think you that such a man will have occasion to go to his closet, or come from it, with the sickly cry, "Why, oh, why is my intercourse with God so irksome to me?" Says Jeremy Taylor, "Easiness of desire is a great enemy to the success of a good man's prayer. Our prayers upbraid our spirits when we beg tamely for those things for which we ought to die; which are more precious than imperial sceptres, richer than the spoils of the sea or the treasures of Indian hills." The scriptural examples of prayer have, most of them, an unutterable intensity. They are pictures of struggles, in which more of suppressed desire is hinted at than that which is expressed. — "*The Still Hour*" (*Phelps*).

Given bread to him & 3-1
He asked God in our time not for a miracle

LUKE 11: 5-13.

LESSON XI.

THIRD QUARTER.

his friend, yet because of his importunity¹ he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

9 And I say unto you, Ask,² and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

11 If a son shall ask bread of

any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

¹ ch. 18: 1-8. ² Matt. 7: 7; 21: 22. John 15: 7. Jas. 1: 5. 1 John 3: 22.

9. **Ask, and it shall be given you.** The three repetitions of the command are more than mere repetitions; since to seek is more than to ask, and to knock than to seek; and thus in this ascending scale of earnestness, an exhortation is given, not merely to prayer, but to increasing urgency in prayer. — *Trench*. The only limitation to this promise, which under various forms is several times repeated by our Lord, is furnished in verses 11-13 and Jas. 4: 3. — *Alford*. Seeking and knocking imply that kind of asking which *uses the means*. One reason why God requires us to ask in order to receive, is that it makes our daily wants a means of communion with God. We get acquainted with men when some need or sorrow or mutual pursuit opens our hearts. We learn more of another's soul in one hour than in years of common intercourse. So also by our troubles, by the things we want, and asking God for them, we get nearer to the heart of God than by ages of mere receiving his blessings. — Christians often have little faith in prayer as a *power in real life*. Any unperturbed mind will conceive of the scriptural idea of prayer as that of one of the most downright, sturdy realities in the universe. It has, and God has *determined* that it should have, a positive and an appreciable influence in directing the course of a human life. It is, and God has *purposed* that it should be, a link of connection between human mind and divine mind, by which, through his infinite condescension, we may actually move his will. It is, and God has *decreed* that it should be, a *power*, as distinct, as real, as natural, and as uniform, as the power of gravitation, or of light, or of electricity. A man may use it as trustingly and as soberly as he would use either of these. "Good prayers," says an old English divine, "never come weeping home. I am sure I shall receive either *what* I ask, or *what* I *should* ask." — *Phelps*. For the kind of seeking, see Prov. 2: 3, 4; 18: 17. Jer. 29: 13. Luke 13: 24. Contrast with this teaching, where man is represented as seeking and knocking, other passages where the Lord is represented as the one seeking, and we as the found (Luke 15: 3, 10; Rev. 3: 20). Compare Matt. 5: 6, where the mental state is described as hunger and thirst after righteousness, of which asking, seeking, knocking, is the expression or utterance, the activity to which it leads. — *Abbott*.

10. **Every one that asketh receiveth.** This verse declares to us not merely a result observable here among men (in which sense it is *not universally true*), but a *great law* of our Father's spiritual kingdom, a clause out of the eternal covenant, which cannot be changed. — *Alford*.

11. **If a son shall ask bread (or "a loaf"), will he give him a stone? round and smooth, like such a loaf or cake as was much in use, but only to mock him. Or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?** Like it, indeed, but only to sting him. — *J. F. and B.* The child is here supposed to ask bread that is necessary, and a fish that is wholesome; but if the child should foolishly ask for a stone, or a serpent, for unripe fruit to eat, or a sharp knife to play with, the father, though kind, is so wise as to deny him. We often ask that of God which would do us hurt if we had it. He knows it, and therefore does not give it to us. The world often gives stones for bread, and serpents for fish, but God never does. — *Henry*.

12. **If he shall ask an egg . . . a scorpion?** Most scorpions in Palestine are black and long; looking like a lobster, and not like an egg. But Burckhardt and other old writers say that there was a white scorpion which when folded up had the latter resemblance. — *Whedon*. No parent turns away his child with that which would be unsatisfactory or injurious. God is better and kinder than the most tender earthly parents; and with what confidence, therefore, may we come as his children, and ask what we need! — *Barnes*.

13. **If ye then, being evil.** Parents, he says, are evil; that is, are imperfect, often partial, blind, and sometimes passionate, and yet they give to their children; but God is free from all this, and

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He who asks shall receive—of the very best. One promise without reserve, and only one, because it includes all, remains; the promise of the Holy Spirit to them who ask it. He who has the Spirit of God, God himself, in him, has the life in him, possesses the final cure of all ill, has in himself the answer to all possible prayer.—George Macdonald.

therefore is far more ready and willing to aid us. Even in our highest, holiest relations there is evil; selfishness is mingled with our most unselfish love. — *Abbott*. How much more shall your heavenly Father. Bad as our fallen nature is, the father in us is not extinguished. What a heart, then, must the Father of all fathers have towards his pleading children! — *J. F. and B.* Your heavenly Father. There is a notable distinction between the Greek words so translated, and those rendered, "Father which art in heaven," in the Lord's Prayer. Here it signifies, "Father from heaven:" there it is, "Father ~~in~~ heaven." Alford remarks that, "when we address God, he is our Father in heaven: when he answers us, he is our Father from heaven. In the former case we go up to him and his abode: in the latter case he comes down to us." — *Ryle*. The Holy Spirit. The corresponding passage in Matthew reads, "good things." He will at least give us the Holy Spirit, in which all good things are covered, because it is the saving gift. — *Jacobus*. God's answers to our prayers consist of neither useless nor mischievous things, but of his best gift, — his Holy Spirit, — in all the various and fitting manifestations of his guidance and consolation and teaching, in our lives. — *Alford*. There are three ways in which God answers prayer: (1) The best answer to prayer is that personal communion with God which is better than all gifts, of which the gifts are but the channel and expression. This is implied in verse 13, in the gift of the Holy Spirit. If there were no other answer than this, then even this could not be. It is through other answers that this comes. Therefore (2) there is an answer in giving the exact things asked for. Spiritual gifts, all things that are directly promised, we may be sure of receiving; not always in the way or at the time we expect them, but they are certain to be given. But there are some things which cannot be given thus: as, when two pray for opposite things at the same time; two opposing sides, each to gain the victory; two farmers, one for rain, the other for sunshine, at the same time. There is, therefore (3) a giving, in the place of the thing asked for, something better: namely, the very thing we would have asked for, had we known all things as God knows them, — the very thing we really wanted. A child cries for some white powder, thinking it to be sugar. The parent knows it to be poison, and gives the child some real sugar from another place. The exact thing asked for is not given, but the real prayer, the real thing intended, is given. God always gives us exactly what we ask for, or that better something which our souls really mean, and would have asked had we known all.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. I was pleasantly impressed lately by an incident which occurred in a brief correspondence which I had with Prof. — of —. We were writing in part upon this subject, and I had incidentally mentioned your meeting. In his reply, he artlessly, and with the trustfulness of a child, asked that you might be requested to pray for him. This man is no fanatic. Still less is he a hypocrite. He is one of the ripest of our American scholars, and one of the most profound of our philosophers. A good part of his life he has spent in the study of Plato; and now, after 60 odd years, in which human philosophy has become an alphabet to him, and universities on both sides of the Atlantic honor him for his acquisitions, he thinks and speaks of the prayers of a few humble women, strangers to him, and hundreds of miles away, as if they possessed a real power of which he may avail himself for the achievement of real results which shall stretch on into other worlds. He proposes to use that power as trustfully as he would send a commission by a friend to Europe. He gives you his request in the same conviction that he is doing a sensible thing, which he would feel in sending a message to the telegraph office, knowing it would reach the other side of the globe in twenty minutes. Such is the trust which the ablest and wisest men repose in intercessory prayer, when they have been as wisely taught of God. We shall all find, by and by, that the most natural thing in the world for all wisdom to do is to sit at the feet of Christ, and ask for that which nothing else than prayer can compass. — *Austin Phelps*.

II. "Prayer pulls the rope below, and the great bell rings above in the ears of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so languidly; others give but an occasional pluck at the rope; but he who wins with heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly, and pulls continuously, with all his might." — *Biblical Treasury*.

III. I never was deeply interested in any object, I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for any thing, *but it came*; at some time, no matter at how distant a day, in some shape, probably the last I should have devised, *it came*. — *Adoniram Judson*.

IV. I remember well hearing it objected to the doctrine of prayer, that, while we at the North were praying for the success of our armies, the pious Gen. Stonewall Jackson was praying with equal faith for the success of the South. It was said that both prayers could not be answered. But in fact both were answered. For Stonewall Jackson really wanted the true success and prosperity of the South. He thought he saw it in the success of their arms; but God knew that in the failure of their arms, and in the success of liberty and the abolition of slavery, was the true success

of the South. And without doubt, to-day Stonewall Jackson in heaven is thanking God for the way in which He answered his prayers. So will it be found true of all sincere prayer that seems for the time to be unanswered.

"In spite of many broken dreams,
This have I truly learned to say:

The prayers I thought unanswered once
Were answered in God's own best way."

V. Seek as well as ask. Frederick Douglass used to say that he often prayed for freedom, but his prayer was never answered till he prayed with his feet.

PRACTICAL.

1. How strong the argument from imperfect men to a perfect God! — "How much more?"
2. Prayer without earnest importunity lacks the main elements of prayer.
3. Earnestness is essential to true receiving, as hunger is for the receiving of food.
4. God has great and precious things in store for us, and loves to give them, longs to give them.
5. The hinderance to receiving is entirely on our part. The asking and seeking are required in order to fit us to receive, to make it possible for us to receive.
6. Ask, seek, knock. That is, pray in every way and form; pray with body and soul, with hands and feet, as well as lips; pray by using every means, as well as words.
7. We put our own limits to what we receive, — limited by our asking, and thus our fitness to receive.
8. Asking God for great things, especially his best gifts, honors God as rich, strong, good, willing to give.
9. God loves most to give his Holy Spirit, his best gift.

LESSON XII. — SEPTEMBER 22, 1878.

WARNING AGAINST COVETOUSNESS. — LUKE 12: 13-23.

TIME. A.D. 29, autumn. Robinson places it a year earlier, and in Galilee.

PLACE. Probably in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

THE CONNECTION.

There are a number of discourses given about this time, between the feast of tabernacles (Oct. 11) and the feast of dedication in December. Jesus was part of the time near Jerusalem (John 11), and part at Ephraim, and in the wilderness around the lower waters of Jordan (John 11: 53, 54). He is now discoursing to a large multitude of people, and warning them against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and opening to his disciples their dangers and the sources of help. In the midst of one of our Lord's most interesting discourses, an interruption occurs. One of his hearers had so slight an interest in the spiritual truths which he was communicating, but had so much at heart the redressing of a wrong which he believed himself to have sustained in his worldly interests, that, as would seem, he could not wait for a more convenient season, but broke in upon the Lord's teaching, with that request which gave occasion for this parable (verses 16-20). — *Trench*.

13 ¶ And one of the company said | brother, that he divide the inherit-
unto him, Master, speak to my | ance with me.¹

¹ Ezek. 33: 31.

EXPLANATORY.

13. One of the company. Of the multitude (verse 1) who were listening to Jesus. The man was evidently *not a disciple*, nor preparing to be one, but *some hearer in the crowd*, whose mind had been working in him during our Lord's last sayings about the care of Providence for his friends; and he thought his was *just the case his circumstances wanted*; being, as appears, oppressed by his brother in the matter of his patrimony. Possibly, too, he had an idea that the Messiah, or the great

Receive my instruction and not silver — Prov 8 - 10th 14 —

THIRD QUARTER.

LESSON XII.

LUKE 12: 13-23

Every kind of covetousness

14 And he said unto him, Man,¹ who made me a judge or a divider over you?

15 And he said unto them, Take

heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

¹ John 18: 36. * 1 Tim. 6: 7-10. * Job 2: 4. Matt. 6: 25.

rabbi to whom he was listening, was come to set all things right; and, with that feeling which we all have of the surpassing injustice of *our own* wrongs, broke out with this inopportune request. — *Alford*. That he divide the inheritance. An inheritance is the property which is left by a father to his children. Among the Jews the older brother had two shares, or twice as much as any other child (Deut. 21: 17). The remainder was then equally divided among all the children. — *Barnes*. It has been sometimes taken for granted that this man who desired a division of the inheritance had no right to what he was here claiming, and was only seeking to make an unfair use of the Saviour's influence. But how much does the supposition weaken the moral! All men, without any special teaching, would condemn such unrighteousness as this. But that love of the world, which, keeping itself within limits of decency and legality, yet takes all the affections of the heart from God, and robs divine things of all their interest, — against that men have need to be continually warned; and such a warning is here, — a warning not against unrighteousness, but against covetousness; for this *may* display itself in the manner and temper in which we hold and reclaim our own as truly as in the undue snatching at that of others. — *Trench*.

14. *Man*. A word of solemn reproof (see Rom. 2: 1; 9: 20). This question is expressed in almost the very words of the Israelite rejecting the arbitration of Moses (Exod. 2: 14), and may show us the essential difference of the two offices of Moses and Christ. — *Alford*. Who made me a judge? That he should have desired Christ as an umpire or arbitrator, — and such only the word in the original means (see Acts 7: 27, 35; Exod. 2: 14); such, too, the Lord, without publicly recognized authority, could only have been, — this in itself had nothing sinful. St. Paul himself recommended this manner of settling differences (1 Cor. 6: 1-6). In the request itself there was nothing sinful; yet still the Lord absolutely refused to accede to it: he declined here, as in every other case, to interfere in the affairs of civil life; but it was indeed most true, that his word and doctrine received into the hearts of men, would modify and change the whole framework of civil society. — *Trench*. It was no part of his to take from the oppressor, and give to the oppressed, much less to encourage the oppressed to take from the oppressor himself. It was his part to forbid oppression. It was not his office to determine the boundaries of civil right, nor to lay down the rules of the descent of property. Of course there was a spiritual and moral principle involved in this question; but he would not suffer his sublime mission to degenerate into the mere task of deciding casuistry. He asserted principles of love, unselfishness, order, which would decide all questions; but the questions themselves he would not decide. He would lay down the great political principle, "Render unto Caesar the things that be Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's;" but he would not determine whether this particular tax was due to Caesar, or not. So, too, he would say, justice, like mercy and truth, is one of the weightier matters of the law; but he would not decide whether, in this definite case, this or that brother had justice on his side. It was for themselves to determine that. That this lawsuit should have been decided by the brothers themselves, in love, with mutual fairness, would have been much: that it should be determined by authoritative arbitration was, spiritually speaking, nothing. The right disposition of *their* hearts, and the right division of their property thence resulting, was Christ's kingdom. The apportionment of their property by another's division had nothing to do with his kingdom. — *Robertson*.

15. He said unto them, — unto the multitude. He saw into the covetousness of the man's disposition, and made it an instructive warning for his hearers. — *Alford*. Beware of covetousness. The best copies have "all," i.e., "every kind of covetousness;" because, as this was one of the more plausible forms of it, so he would strike at once at the root of the evil. — *J. F. and B*. Covetousness. In the original the word is a very expressive one. It means the desire of having more, — not of having more because there is not enough, but simply a craving after more, — more when a man has not enough, more when he has; more, more, ever more; give, give; divide, divide. — *Robertson*. A man may be said to be given to covetousness, when his thoughts are wholly taken up about the world; when he takes more pains for the getting of earth than for the getting of heaven; when all his discourse is about the world; when he doth so set his heart upon worldly things that for the sake of them he will part with the heavenly; when he overloads himself with worldly business; when his heart is so set upon the world, that to get it he cares not what unlawful, indirect means he useth. — *Watson*. It was covetousness which caused the unjust brother to withhold; it was covetousness which made the defrauded brother indignantly complain to a stranger. It is covetousness which is at the bottom of

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This¹ will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul,² thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat,³ drink, and be merry.

¹ Jas. 4: 15, 16. ² Pa. 49: 18. ³ Eccl. 11: 9. 1 Cor. 15: 32. Jas. 5: 5.

all lawsuits, all social grievances, all political factions. So St. James traces the genealogy (ch. 4: 1). Covetousness: the covetousness of all; of the oppressed as well as the oppressor; for the cry, "Divide" has its root in covetousness just as truly as "I will not." — *Robertson*. A man's life. One's true life, his blessedness. — *Trench*. The world life is used in its pregnant sense, emphatically his life, including time and eternity. This is self-evident from the parable and its application. — *Alford*. The true remedy for this covetousness Christ gives: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Observe the distinction between his view and the world's view of humanity. To the question, What is a man worth? the world replies by enumerating what he has; the Son of man, by estimating what he is. Not what he has, but what he is, — that, through time and through eternity, is his real and proper life. He declared the presence of the soul; he announced the dignity of the spiritual man; he revealed the being that we are, — not that which is supported by meat and drink, but that whose very life is in truth, integrity, honor, purity. The other brother had the inheritance: the price he paid for that advantage was a hard heart. The injured brother had no inheritance; but instead he had, or might have had, innocence and the conscious joy of knowing that he was not the injurer. The price which the rich man pays for his wealth is the temptation to be selfish. If you will be rich, you must be content to pay the price of falling into temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts. If that price be too high to pay, then you must be content with the quiet valleys of existence, where alone it is well with us; kept out of the inheritance, but having instead God for your portion, peace and quietness, and rest with Christ. — *Robertson*.

16. He spake a parable. Man's life is of God, not of his goods, however abundant they may be. Our Lord in this parable sets before us one arrived at the very height of worldly prosperity, and that by no unfair means; as Augustine says, "not by removing landmarks, not by robbing the poor, not by over-reaching the simple." It was by God's blessing that he became thus rich, which might have been a real blessing if he had known how to use it. — *Alford*. The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (Prov. 1: 32), a truth to which this man sets his seal, for his prosperity ensnares him in a deeper worldliness, draws out the selfish propensities of his heart into stronger action. It might at first sight appear, that the time when we should be in chiefest danger of setting our heart upon riches would be when we saw them escaping from our grasp, — perishing from under our hand. But all experience testifies the contrary, — that earthly losses are the remedy for covetousness, while increase in worldly goods is that which chiefly provokes to it, serving not as water to quench, but as fuel to augment the fire. — *Trench*.

17. He thought within himself. The curtain is here drawn back, and we are admitted into the inner council-chamber of a worldling's heart, — rejoicing over his abundance, and realising to the very letter the making "provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." — *Trench*. No room where to bestow my fruits. "Thou hast barns, — the bosoms of the needy, the houses of the widows, the mouths of orphans and of infants." — *Ambrose*.

18. This will I do: pull down my barns. Barns are depositories and granaries. These in the East are pits built under ground, with an opening at the top. In these the grain could be stored so as to be more safe, both from thieves and from vermin. We found them often open like a coal-vault, near the road. He proposes to enlarge these pits by pulling down the walls or sides, and extending them. — *Jacobus*. His folly is fourfold: he forgets the Giver (my fruits, my goods), he greedily reserves all for himself, he imagines such things to be food for his soul, he forgets death which is every day possible. — *Slier*. According to the world's judgment, there was nothing sinful in all this: his riches were fairly got, nor yet was there any thing which the world condemns in the plans which he laid out of his future enjoyment, in the decent Epicureanism which he meditated. — *Trench*.

19. I will say to my soul. Indolence, gluttony, drunkenness, and licentiousness; in these

20 But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy¹ soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?²

21 So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself,³ and is not rich⁴ toward God.

22 ¶ And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take⁵ no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

23 The life is more than meat, and the body *is more* than raiment.

* Job 20: 20-23; 27: 8. Ps. 52: 7. Jas. 4: 14. * Ps. 39: 6; 49: 16, 17. Jer. 17: 11. * Hab. 2: 9. * ver. 33. 1 Tim. 6: 18. Jas. 2: 5. * Matt. 6: 25, &c.

four things lie this man's conception of life. — *Whedon*. If this man had only had the sense of a hog, what other thing could he have said? — *Basil*. His plans of felicity, it may be observed, rise no higher than to this satisfying of the flesh; so that there is an irony as melancholy as it is profound in making him address this speech, not to his body, but to his *soul*. — *Trench*.

20. But God said. The man had had his *say*: there is now a higher Being who puts in a word. — *Whedon*. Thou fool. The Greek word so translated means literally, without mind, or sense, or understanding. It is the same word as in Luke 11: 40. Let us mark, that just when the rich man was scheming cunningly, and thinking himself *very wise*, God says to him, "*Thou fool*." — *Ryle*. This *title* is opposed to the opinion of his own prudence and foresight which he entertained; "*this night*," to the many years that he promised to himself; and that "*soul*," which he purposed to nourish and make fat, it is declared shall be inexorably "*required*" and painfully rendered up. — *Trench*. Why is this man called a "*fool*"? (1) Because he deemed a life of secure and abundant earthly enjoyment the summit of human felicity. (2) Because, possessing the means of this, through prosperity in his calling, he flattered himself that he had a long lease of such enjoyment, and nothing to do but give himself up to it. — *J. F. and B.* Thy soul shall be required; literally, "They shall require thy soul." There is a force in the words, "shall be required of thee," a force which Theophylact well brings out: "For, like pitiless exactors of tribute, terrible angels shall require thy soul from thee unwilling, and through love of life resisting. For from the righteous his soul is not *required*; but he commits it to God and the Father of spirits, pleased and rejoicing, nor finds it hard to lay it down, for the body lies upon it as a light burden." — *Trench*. Whose shall those things be. See Eccles. 2: 18, 19. Ps. 39: 6. With all his precautions, how little could he tell into what hands this wealth should fall after his death! — *Jacobus*.

21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God, or does not enrich himself toward God. Self and God are here contemplated as the two poles between which the soul is placed, for one or other of which it must determine, and then make that one the end of all its aims and efforts. — *Trench*. This is the character of him who gives nothing to God's glory, — neither money, affection, thought, time, nor interest; plenty to give to the world, but nothing to give to God. Those are the truly rich, who have property which will be recognized at the day of judgment. Many owners of millions are paupers before God. — *Ryle*.

22. Therefore I say unto you. Our Lord having thus warned his hearers against covetousness, and knowing how often it springs from a distrust in God's providential care, goes on to teach them where they may find that which shall be the best preservative against all such over-anxious thoughts for the future; namely, in the assurance of the love and care of a heavenly Father (verses 22-30), so that the connection is as close as it is beautiful, between this parable and the instructions which immediately follow. — *Trench*. Take no thought. Take not anxious thought. — *Alford*. "Be not solicitous." The English word "*thought*" when our version was made, expressed this idea of solicitude, anxious concern, as may be seen in any old English classic (see Shakespeare). But this sense of the word has now nearly gone out; and so the mere English reader is apt to be perplexed. *Thought* or forethought for temporal things, — in the sense of reflection, consideration, — is required alike by Scripture and common sense. It is that anxious solicitude, that carking care, which springs from unbelieving doubts and misgivings, which alone is here condemned. — *J. F. and B.* For your life, what ye shall eat. We have in the following verses a collection of striking arguments against over-anxiety about the things of this world. At first sight they may seem to some minds simple and commonplace; but, the more they are pondered, the more weighty will they appear. Christ bids us remember that a Christian man should be ashamed of being as anxious as a heathen. The "*nations of the world*" may well be careful about food, and raiment, and the like; but the man who can say of God, "*He is my Father*," and of Christ, "*He is my*

Saviour," ought surely to be above such anxieties and cares.—*Ryle*. You turn it exactly round: food is meant to serve life, but life forsooth serves food; clothes are to serve the body, but the body forsooth must serve the clothing; and so blind is the world, that it sees not this.—*Luther*.

23. The life is more than meat. If he can give you life, he can give you means to support it; and would he furnish the *greater*, and not the *less*? The idea is, that he has given you life and a body, without your care. He will give you food and raiment, which are the lesser gifts.—*Jacobus*. As the life is more than meat which serves it, and the body than raiment which clothes it, so the soul is more than either; for both life and body exist only for the development of the soul. But our anxieties are not for the soul, but only about the outer things, the mere food and raiment.—*Abbott*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. The worldly spirit makes possession the object of life. Christ makes *being*, character, the object. The world asks, "What do you possess?" God asks, "What *are* you?" A gentleman once said to a wicked man, "You do not look as if you had prospered by your wickedness."—"I have not prospered at it," cried the man. "With half the time and energy I have spent, I might have been a man of property and character. But I am a homeless wretch; twice I have been in State prison. I have made acquaintance with all sorts of miseries; but I tell you, *my worst punishment is in being what I am*." Without doubt it would be delightful to have the possessions of an angel; but it would be ten thousand times better to be an angel. Not what *have* I, but what *am* I? not, what shall I *gain*, but what shall I *be*? is the true question of life.

II. When the Californian steamer, the "Central American," caught fire, and was sinking, the stewardess ran into the cabins of the passengers, collecting all the gold she could find, and tied it in an apron round her waist. A boat was ready to start; in her eagerness to be saved, she sprang from the deck, missed her aim, and shot head first into the water like a cannon-ball, the weight of her ill-gotten booty dragging her down as effectively as a millstone.—*Biblical Treasury*.

III. I hold that it is more important to maintain a spiritual church membership than to maintain the written Constitution. The unwritten constitution of America is more important than its written; and the first article in the unwritten ought to be one that makes a distinction between a true church and its opposite. What is the average type of a counterfeit church? A hammock, attached on one side of the cross, and, on the other, held and swung to and fro by the forefingers of Mammon; its freight of nominal Christians elegantly moaning meanwhile over the evils of the times, and not at ease unless fanned by eloquence and music, and sprinkled by social adulations into perfumed, unheroic slumber.—*Joseph Cook*.

PRACTICAL.

1. Even under the preaching of Jesus, there were unreceptive and inattentive listeners.—*Van Oosterzee*.
2. Worldliness shows itself in the times of greatest spiritual instruction.
3. How poor a rich man, and how rich a poor man, may be!—*Van Oosterzee*.
4. The love of money is a root of all evil.
5. The poor rich fool comes before God's judgment with a lost name, a lost soul, a lost world a lost heaven.—*Heubner*.
6. Children of princes and kings need not torment themselves with anxious care, and Christians even much less.—*Canstein*.
7. The chief care of the Christian, — care not *how long*, but *how* thou livest.
8. Men's souls may be ruined, their characters lost, by things which are right in themselves.
9. No worldly goods or success can satisfy the soul.
10. It is folly to lay up treasures on earth, and not in heaven.
11. The manner in which God treated the subject of this folly: (1) This man was called away suddenly; (2) unexpectedly; (3) amidst a profusion of worldly goods; (4) by language which strongly expressed the divine displeasure.
12. The lust of avarice has so totally seized upon mankind, that their wealth seems rather to possess them, than they possess their wealth.—*Pliny*.
13. Avarice reigns in those who have but few qualities to recommend them. This is a weed that will grow in a barren soil.—*Hughes*.
14. Refrain from covetousness, and thy estate shall prosper.—*Plato*.
15. The wealth of covetous persons is like the sun after he is set, — delights none.—*Socrates*.
16. A great fortune is a great slavery.—*Seneca*.

FOURTH QUARTER.

From Oct. 6, to Dec. 29, 1878.

LESSON I. — OCTOBER 6, 1878.

WARNING AGAINST FORMALISM. — LUKE 13: 22-30.

TIME. Winter; early months of A.D. 30. Jesus thirty-three years old.

PLACE. Perea beyond Jordan. On the last journey of Jesus, starting from Bethabara where John baptized, and ending at Jerusalem.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Roman empire, 17th year; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa, 5th year; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, 34th year.

THE CONNECTION.

The interval of two months between the feast of tabernacles, Oct. 11, A.D. 29, and that of the dedication early in December, seems to have been spent partly in Jerusalem, and partly in its neighborhood; especially in that happy home at Bethany, in the house of Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary. Then driven from Jerusalem by plots against his life at the feast of dedication (John 10: 22-31), he retires to Bethabara, beyond Jordan, in Perea, where John at first baptized (John 10: 40). From his retirement here he was summoned again to Bethany, by the sickness and death of Lazarus (John 11). After raising him from the dead, he retired to a city called Ephraim (John 11: 54), the Ephraim of the Old Testament, and Ephraim of 2 Chron. 23: 19, and modern Taiyibeh, 20 Roman miles N.N.E. of Jerusalem, and 6 miles N.E. of Bethel, on the borders of the desert that stretches away to the Jordan and Dead Sea. Thence he seems to have withdrawn himself again to Perea beyond Jordan, "perhaps to place himself within Herod's jurisdiction." From this place he begins his final movement toward Jerusalem, which begins with Luke 13: 22, — the lesson of to-day; and he proceeds leisurely through these populous regions, through Jericho, to Jerusalem, preaching in the villages on the way. To this progress through Perea should probably be referred those most impressive parables and lessons which occupy the 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th chapters of St. Luke, except chap. 17: 11-49.

22 And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,

EXPLANATORY.

22. Through the cities and villages. Of Perea, beyond Jordan, and on the way between there and Jerusalem. (See "Connection.") Teaching. The parables and instructions of the next five chapters were probably spoken at this time. Toward Jerusalem. This was on his last journey to Jerusalem, which he reached on Friday evening, March 30, A.D. 30; six days before the passover, and seven before his crucifixion, Friday, April 6.

23. Said one unto him. The inquirer can hardly have been a disciple of Jesus (see verse 28), but most likely a Jew from the multitude, who had heard his discourses, and, either from Jewish pride, or perhaps out of real desire to learn from him, put this question. — *Alford*. That be saved. Here the implication of final salvation is obvious. — *Alford*. Saved means not merely to escape the punishment of sin, and reach a place called heaven, but always means saved from the state of sin, from the love of sin, from alienation from God, into that character which belongs to the true, obedient children of our heavenly Father. Few that be saved. The only way to answer this question is that adopted by Christ; not looking chiefly at the future, — "Will there be few?" but at the actual state of men, — Are there few or many who now are actually in the state of salvation from sin? It is vain to say that the many will be saved in the future. The real question is, are there many saved to-day?

24 ¶ Strive¹ to enter in at the strait gate: for many,² I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

25 When once³ the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut⁴ to

the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord,⁵ Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

¹ Matt. 7: 13. ² John 7: 34; 8: 21. ³ Ps. 32: 6. Isa. 55: 6. ⁴ Matt. 26: 10. ⁵ ch. 6: 46.

But neither the answer of Christ, nor the actual present state, declares that it will always be true that few shall be saved. There is every reason, in the promises of Christ's kingdom, to believe that, in the ages to come, the many saved will be to the few that are lost; the leaves of the forest to the stunted verdure of the desert, or as the people of the State to the few in our prisons. Every year the proportion of the saved is growing larger.

24. Strive. "Strain every nerve." The term is taken from the Grecian games, where they wrestled, and ran the race, in order to win the crown of laurel which belonged to the victor. It is the term, too, from which is our word "agonize." — *Jacobus*. Strait gate. A narrow and difficult gate. The word is not the same as *straight*. The idea of narrowness is preserved in our use of the word *strait*. Observe, the gate is put before the way (Matt. 7: 14). It is not, therefore, the gate out of life, at the end of the pilgrimage, but the gate into the Christian life, as Bunyan represents it in *Pilgrim's Progress*. As here used, the gate is not equivalent to the door in John 10: 2. The strait gate is the spirit of real and hearty allegiance to Jesus Christ, by which we enter unto him. — *Abbott*. The gate to eternal life must be narrow, by the very nature of things. There are a thousand wrong ways, but only one right one. The needle may point in a myriad of directions: only one is due north. Faithful obedience to Christ is the necessary way to eternal life. It is one and alone, but there are a multitude of ways in which men disobey him. But note, the way to life is as wide as the love of God can make it. It is not narrow to keep men out, but because it must be narrow; because salvation and life are not possible except through the one way of reconciliation to God and love of holiness, through Jesus Christ. Seek to enter in. We must not understand, "shall seek to enter in by it, and shall not be able." The emphasis of the command is, Seek to enter at the narrow door; for many shall seek to enter (elsewhere), and shall not be able. After "enter" is to be supplied, in both places, into salvation, or into the kingdom of God. — *Alford*. Shall not be able. It is not because the gate is difficult to find, but because we are unwilling to find and enter in through the gate, that there are few who enter. It is wide enough to admit any soul, but too narrow to admit any sin. Observe, too, that not only the gate is strait, but the subsequent way is narrow. Like a mountain path cut in the rocks, a little deviation is attended with dangerous consequences; — deviation, not from circumscribed rules, but from the spirit of Christ's precepts. Though the way is narrow, it is a highway, in which mere ignorance cannot go astray; though compressed, it is, to him whose heart is fully set to walk in it, the way of life and liberty. — *Abbott*.

25. When once. "From the time that." In this verse is a reason why this "strive" is so important. — *Alford*. Allusion is made to nuptial feasts. These were celebrated by night. The house was filled with lights. Thus they who were admitted had the benefit of light; but they who were excluded were in darkness outside the house, — "outer darkness," which necessarily appeared more gloomy compared with the light within. The guests entered by a narrow wicket gate, at which the porter stood to prevent the unbidden from rushing in. When all that had been invited were arrived, the door was shut, and not opened to those who stood without, however much they knocked.

Major. Risen up. From his seat. Here the feast is one at which a householder — "master of the house" — entertained his own family relationship. When all were assembled, he rises and closes the door; not the gate, for this was without where the janitor sat, but the door of the house. There could be no longer any admittance to the feast, and it was no fault of the gate, but of those who did not enter. — *Jacobus*. Knock. To seek admission to the feast. Lord, Lord. In the title "Lord," they claim to stand in a near and intimate relation to him; as in the "Lord, Lord," twice repeated, is an evidence of the earnestness with which they now claim admission, some say also of their vain confidence; but perhaps rather of the misgiving which already possesses them, lest they should be excluded from the feast, lest it be now too late, lest the needful conditions be found unfulfilled on their part. — *Trench*. I know you not. It is not that he disclaims an outward knowledge, but he does not know them in that sense in which the Lord says, "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." This knowledge is of necessity reciprocal; so that Augustine's, though it may seem at first a slight, is indeed a very profound remark, when explaining, I know you not, he observes it is nothing else than

26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

27 But he¹ shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers² of iniquity.

28 There³ shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,

and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out.

29 And they⁴ shall come from the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

30 And, behold, there⁵ are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

¹ Matt. 7: 22, 23; 25: 12, 41. ² Ps. 6: 8; 101: 8. ³ Matt. 8: 12; 13: 42; 24: 51. ⁴ Rev. 7: 9, 10. ⁵ Matt. 19: 30.

"Ye know not me."—*Treach.* Whence ye are. Ye are none of my family, have no relationship with me.—*Alford.*

26. Then; answering to *when*, verse 25. Begin to say. They will need only to begin; for the answer is ready from the first. There are here two examples of fruitless seeking; first they knock, then they begin to reason and plead. Eaten and drunk in thy presence. As to the then assembled crowd, these words refer to the miracle of feeding, perhaps also to his having so often sat at meat in the houses of various persons. "Eating and drinking" is a general expression for taking a meal. It is merely in *his presence*, very different from the drinking *with* you (Matt. 26: 29). —*Alford.* To have eaten with one is evidence of acquaintanceship or friendship. So the sinner may allege that he was a professed follower of Jesus, and had some evidence that Jesus was his friend. There is no allusion here, however, to the sacrament. It is a figure taken from the customs of men, and means simply that they had professed attachment. —*Barnes.* Taught in our streets. We have heard thee preach. Our Lord here slightly changes the man from *householder* to *preacher*; that is, from his parabolic to his real self. —*Jacobus.* Applicable further in its fuller sense to all among whom the gospel is preached, even to the end. —*Alford.*

27. Depart from me. Those who *will* not be the friends of Jesus, the obedient, loving children of God, *cannot* be in his family. He does not exclude them: they exclude themselves by not being fit to be with him, by refusing to have the character and do the works of his children. The leader of a choir will not let into his number those who will not learn to sing. It is the refusal to learn that excludes them. He bids them depart from him, because in reality, in character, in nature, in works, they are far from him. Workers of iniquity. Persons engaged in the hire, and receiving the wages, of unrighteousness. —*Alford.* Only wickedness keeps men from Christ. If they *will not enter in to his feast*, it is some sin outside that they prefer to him inside. Christ is the leader in every thing good, away from every thing bad; so that one who rejects Christ must reject the good, and choose the evil.

28. There shall be. The expelled are now represented as those who find themselves in the midst of night, but at this remove are yet witnesses of the joy which awaits the members of the family. —*Lange.* Weeping and gnashing. They, without light or company, or comfort, spent their days and nights in weeping from grief, and in vainly gnashing their teeth from indignation. —*Barnes.* For the most part the Bible representations of future punishment are of a fixity in a state of sin (Rev. 22: 11), and of banishment from the presence of God (2 Thess. 1: 9). —*Abbott.* See Abraham, &c. Old Testament saints are in the kingdom of God. Those had benefit by the Messiah who died before his coming; for they *saw his day*. New Testament sinners will be thrust out. —*Henry.* Yourselves thrust out. Compare a remarkable contrast in the rabbinical books, illustrating Jewish pride: "God said to the Israelites, In the world to come I will spread for you a vast table, which the Gentiles shall see, and be confounded." —*Alford.* The sight of the saints' glory will be a great aggravation of sinners' misery. —*Henry.* And so, because they will be conscious that they might have been in that glory too, if they had been willing.

29. They shall come from the east, &c. In these two verses (29, 30) is the real answer to the question of verse 23 given, "They shall be MANY, but what is that to you, if you be not among them?" —*Alford.* East . . . west; . . . north . . . south. Bengel suggests the idea that these points of the compass are intentionally arranged thus, to show the order in which the Gentiles would be called in all over the world. It certainly is a fact that the gospel first took root in Syria and Asia Minor,

then spread on to the west of Europe, and along the shores of the Mediterranean, then turned northward to the Scandinavian nations and Britain, and since that time has spread, toward the south, in Africa, Asia, South America, and the South Pacific Ocean. — *Ryle*. Sit down. To the great gospel feast, as part of the great family of God.

30. There are last . . . first . . . are first . . . last. This is a proverbial expression which was literally fulfilled when the gospel was first preached, and has often been fulfilled since, both in churches and individuals. The Jews, who were first, became last; and the Gentiles, who were last, became first. The churches of Asia-Minor and Africa were called first, and were famous when Britain was only a field for missionaries; but now those churches have become last, and the British churches fill the foremost position in Christendom. And they too, "if they continue not in God's goodness, will be cut off" (Rom. 11: 22). — *Ryle*. Many who are first in privileges shall be last in character. Many who are first in opportunities shall be last in usefulness. Many who are first in earthly riches shall be last in treasures in heaven. Many who seem first and most prominent on earth shall be last and least in heaven. A comfort to those who seem last; a warning to those who think themselves first.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. **The strait gate.** In a book of symbolic pictures there is one of the strait and narrow gate. The gateway in the wall (and there is no other way through it) was just large enough for a man to go through kneeling. One man is trying to go through with great bags of money unjustly obtained, but they will not pass. Another grasps the world in his arms, but it is too large to go through the gate. Still another has huge bales of rags labelled "self-righteousness," but he cannot get through the gate with them. Another passed through only by leaving his rum-bottles, which lie broken at the bottom of the hill by the gate. There is room for any man, but there is not room for the smallest sin to pass.

II. (Verse 28.) **What might have been.** Some years ago the governor of Pennsylvania signed the death-warrant of a young man for murder. Visiting the prison soon after, the jailer asked him to go and see the young man in his cell. The governor, a pious man, went in, conversed and prayed with him, and went home. After he had gone, the warden asked him if he did not know who it was who had been praying with him. "No." — "Why, that was the governor of the State." The young man burst into a paroxysm of weeping, crying out, "Oh, you cruel, cruel man, why did you not tell me? I might have been saved! Cruel! cruel!" If he had only wept before he sinned, he would not have had to weep now. With us it is we who depart from God, not he from us. But there comes a time when it is too late. Let us pray and beseech God for salvation while he is near.

III. "Of all sad words of tongue or pen,

The saddest are these, *It might have been.*" — *Whittier*.

IV. Socrates was glad when his death approached, because he thought he should go to Hesiod, Homer, and other learned men deceased, whom he expected to meet in the other world: how much more do I rejoice, who am sure that I shall see my Saviour Christ, the saints, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and all holy men who have lived from the beginning of the world! Since I am sure to partake of their felicity, why should not I be willing to die, to enjoy their perpetual society in glory? — *Henry Bullinger*.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 23.) It is not for us to ask curious questions about others' future, but (1) to take heed that we are in the kingdom: (2) to do all we can to bring others in.
2. (Verse 24.) Earnest seeking is the necessary condition of true receiving.
3. Men fall of the kingdom in two ways: (1) by not striving; (2) by striving at the wrong place, not entering in by the right gate.
4. The gate to every good, in this world as well as the next, is narrow.
5. (Verse 25.) God's children are a family with one likeness; with love, union, obedience, the fruits of the Spirit. To join them, we must obtain that likeness through Jesus Christ.
6. God does not know as his family any who have not these family traits.
7. Christian privileges and opportunities, even eating and drinking with God's people, will not carry us to heaven.
8. (Verse 27.) No worker of iniquity can abide with Christ. Rev. 21: 27.
9. (Verse 28.) It is sad to look up and see others enjoying without us, what we might have enjoyed with them, and remember that the only reason is that we would not.
10. (Verse 29.) The many at last shall be saved, take the whole world to the end.
11. (Verse 30.) Privileges do not determine our position in the kingdom of heaven.

LESSON II.—OCTOBER 13, 1878.

THE GOSPEL FEAST.—LUKE 14: 15-24.

TIME. Winter; early part of A.D. 30. Jesus thirty-three years old.

PLACE. Perea beyond Jordan, in Herod's jurisdiction.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

INTRODUCTION.

The Lord had been invited to eat bread with one of the chief Pharisees (verse 1). The meal must have been a costly and a ceremonious one. It included, probably, friends and kinsmen and rich neighbors of his host (verse 12). But among these guests, hostile, as no doubt for the most part they were to the young Galilean teacher, there was one who could not forbear expressing his sympathy with some words which fell from the Lord's lips (verse 15). To him, and in him to us all, this parable was vouchsafed. — *Trench.* There is a similarity between this parable and the one spoken in Matt. 22: 2; but the two are distinct, and spoken on different occasions. — *Whedon.*

15 ¶ And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed¹ is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

16 Then said he unto him, A² certain man made a great supper,³ and bade many:

17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were

* 1 Rev. 19: 9. * Matt. 22: 2, &c. * Isa. 25: 6, 7.

EXPLANATORY.

15. When one of them. One of the rich friends of the Pharisaic host, — a Jew probably. That sat at meat. Luke loves to represent to us the Saviour as sitting at a social table, where he most beautifully reveals his pure humanity. This time he glorifies the meal through table-talk which, more than that of any other, was "seasoned with salt" (Col. 4: 6). — *Van Oosterzee.* The Jews, in the time of the Saviour, took their meals reclining upon couches. Van Lennep says, "The table was usually square or oblong, and the couch either semicircular, as seen among the remains of Herculaneum, or there were three couches, set against three sides of the table, leaving one side open for the servants to set on the food, and attend to the wants of the guests. They reclined upon their left elbows, supported by cushions, the feet being extended outwardly, and the back of each guest turned toward his next neighbor. The uppermost seats at the feast are at the corners of the divans, where they will be served first, and with the choicest morsels." Eat bread in the kingdom of God. He understood Christ as referring to the temporal kingdom for which they looked, when they should sit around him at his table. They believed that the kingdom should be opened by a great feast, of which all the members, the Jews, should be guests. — *Jacobus.*

16. A certain man (i.e., the Saviour) made a great supper. The people of the East take but two regular meals a day; i.e., a hearty breakfast early in the morning, and the principal meal at night after they come home. Rich people often eat a regular meal at noon, but more commonly take some light luncheon. The evening meal is that to which guests are usually invited. It would have been better to have translated the word "supper" *dinner*. In verse 12, "dinner or supper" should have been translated "breakfast or dinner." In John 21: 12, "Come and dine," should have been, "Come and breakfast." — *Van Lennep.* The great supper is the kingdom of God, the feast of fat things in Isa. 25: 6, completed in the marriage-supper of the Lamb, but fully prepared when the glad tidings of the gospel were proclaimed. — *Alford.* A feast is frequently employed in Scripture to be a symbol of what is provided for the soul in the great gift of the Saviour, Christ Jesus. Man not only needs bread for the body, but also for his immortal soul. The first thing in this great feast provided is the forgiveness of sin; the next, regeneration of heart. — *Cummings.* Bade many. There was a class first called. These were not only the Jews, in distinction from the Gentiles, but the rich and learned and great among the Jews, as distinct from the poor (verse 21). — *Jacobus.* Those who might be presumed the most favorably disposed for the embracing of the truth; the most religious among the people, the priests; and elders, the scribes and Pharisees. Christ still bids many: all are bidden. — *Trench.*

17. Sent his servant. The servant represents one spirit, one message; but is not necessarily

bidden, Come; for all¹ things are now ready.

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The

first² said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

¹ Prov. 9:2, 5. Can. 5:1. Isa. 55:1, 2. ² ch. 8:14.

In the three cases one and the same *person*. The three messages were delivered (1) by John the Baptist and our Lord; (2) by our Lord and the apostles; (3) by the apostles and those who came after. — *Alford*. Not the prophets of the old covenant, for it is not till “supper-time” has actually come; but evangelists and apostles, all who, reminding the Jews of the prophecies concerning a coming kingdom, and their share in that kingdom, bade them now enter on the enjoyment of those good things which were no longer good things afar off, but near. — *Trench*. Come. Some will have it that the guests, in needing to be thus reminded that the hour of supper had arrived, already began to show how slightly they esteemed the invitation; but this is a mistake, as such was the usual custom; and their contempt of the honor done them, and their neglect of their word given, — for we must suppose they had accepted the invitation before, — are first testified by their excuses for not appearing at the festival. — *Trench*. Invited and bidden. The hospitality of the present day in the East exactly resembles that of the remotest antiquity. The parable of the “great supper” is, in those countries, literally realized. And such was the hospitality of ancient Greece and Rome. When a person provided an entertainment for his friends or neighbors, he sent round a number of servants to invite the guests: these were called *vocatores* by the Romans, and *κλητῆρες* by the Greeks. The day when the entertainment is to be given is fixed some considerable time before; and, in the evening of the day appointed, a messenger comes to bid the guests to the feast. They were not now asked for the first time; but had already accepted the invitation when the day was appointed, and were therefore already pledged to attend at the hour when they might be summoned. They were not taken unprepared, and could not in consistency and decency plead any prior engagement. They could not now refuse without violating their word, and insulting the master of the feast; and therefore justly subjected themselves to punishment. The terms of the parable exactly accord with established custom, and contain nothing of the harshness to which infidels object. — *Paxton*. All things are now ready. The message representing the proclamation of John the Baptist and our Lord, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” — *Alford*. There was, beyond a doubt, in the world’s history a time when more than any other it might be said, “all things are now ready;” a fulness of time in which, when it was arrived, and not till then, the kingdom of heaven was set up, and men invited — the Jew first, and afterward the Gentile — to enter into it. — *Trench*.

18. They all with one consent. “Of one,” or from one, that is, from one nature or heart. — *Jacobs*. Out of one mind or spirit. — *Trench*. Began to make excuse. The excuses which are mentioned are such as plainly indicated, on the part of those who made them, a slighting both of the entertainment and of him who had prepared it. Real friends would never make such excuses. The excuses were a mere pretence, to cover up the dislike which the persons felt; and thus they manifested a spirit worthy to be frowned on. The *temper* of these self-excusers is threefold; the excuses themselves are threefold; their *spirit* is one. The first alleges a *necessity*, — he *must* go and see his land; the second not so much as this, only his own plan and purpose, — “*I go to prove them*”; the third not so much as either of these, but rudely asserts, “*I cannot*” (i.e., “*I will not come*”). Also the *excuses themselves* are threefold. The first has his worldly possessions, the second his purchase of stock to prove, the third his home engagements. All are detained by *worldliness*, in however varied forms. — *Alford*. The first said unto him. Some one has said, Why did he not look at the ground before he bought it? If he had been a good business man, he would have seen his ground *first*: he couldn’t make the bargain any better by going to look at it now. And, now that he has got it, he can go and look at it any time: the land could not run away. It was not that he had made a partial bargain, and might withdraw, or that some one might step in ahead of him and get the ground from him. He did not even have that excuse. He had bought the land: there was no fear that he should lose his title to it. Yet he must needs go and see it. Strange time to go and see ground, just at supper-time! On the face of it, it was a downright lie. He did not want to go to the feast, and so he manufactured this excuse to ease his conscience. That is what people make excuses for. The Devil gets men into that cradle, and rocks them to sleep in it. — *D. L. Moody*. Have me excused. There is a vast difference between *excuses* and *reasons*. These men gave excuses: they did not give their real reasons. And most of the excuses men give for not becoming Christians are mere excuses: they do not give their reasons. Take away all their excuses, and yet they will remain impenitent.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married¹ a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So the servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry²

said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets³ and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor,⁴ and the maimed, and the halt,⁵ and the blind.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet⁶ there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways

¹ ver. 26. ¹ Cor. 7: 33. ² Ps. 2: 12. ³ Rev. 22: 17. ⁴ 1 Sam. 2: 8. ⁵ Ps. 113: 7, 8. ⁶ Ps. 38: 7. Isa. 33: 23; 35: 6. ⁷ Ps. 103: 6; 130: 7.

19. I have bought five yoke of oxen. Why not prove them before he bought them? It was no time to prove oxen after they were bought. And, now that the bargain was closed, he could prove them any time. Why not let them stand in the stall till he had accepted this invitation? Don't you see that was another lie? — *Moody*.

20. I have married a wife. If in the first two it is the pride and the business, in the last it is the pleasure, of the world, that keeps him from Christ. "See you not that I have a feast of my own? Why trouble me, then, with yours?" According to the Levitical law, this reason of his would have been a sufficient one why he should not have gone to the battle (Deut. 24: 5), but it is none why he should not come to the feast. The other two, even while they plead their excuses, are themselves conscious that they are hardly valid; so that they add, out of a sense of this their insufficiency, "I pray thee have me excused." But this one accounts that he has a reason perfectly good why he should not attend, and troubles not himself, therefore, to make a courteous denial, but bluntly refuses. — *Trench*. The third man's excuse was the most ridiculous of them all. "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Why did he not take his wife along with him? Who likes to go to a feast better than a young bride? He might have asked her to go too; and, if she were not willing, then let her stay at home. The fact was, *he did not want to go*. — *Moody*. Surely he takes the text in too large a sense, that because it says, "A man shall leave all, and cleave to his wife," therefore he shall leave God. It is but the father and mother on earth, and not the Father of heaven, that for her he may forsake. — *Owen Feltham*.

21. Came and showed his lord these things. Declared the ill success which he has met, reported to him the excuses which all had made; even as hitherto, in all likelihood, not so much as one among the spiritual chiefs of the Jewish nation had attached himself openly and without reserve to Christ (John 7: 48). — *Trench*. Go out quickly. The day of grace is merging fast into the day of glory; the seed-time is passing away; the currents of time are merging into the ocean of eternity. — *Cummings*. Into the streets and lanes. He was angry at these, and gave the direction to go to another class, yet still of the Jews of the city; but to go from the palaces to the streets and lanes, and call in such as the poor, &c. — *Jacobus*. In these words there would seem a distinct reminiscence of the precept which Christ just before had given to him at whose table he was sitting, — "Call thou the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind" (verse 13). He would encourage him to this by showing him that it is even thus with the great Giver of the heavenly feast. He calls the spiritually sick, the spiritually needy; while the rich in their own virtues, in their own merits, at once exclude themselves, and are excluded by him, he calls these poor to sit down at his table. The people who knew not the law, and whom the Pharisees accounted cursed, the despised and outcasts of the nation, the publicans and sinners, — these should enter into the kingdom of God before the great, the wise, the proud; before those who said they saw; before those who thanked God they were not as other men; before those who counted that they had need of nothing. — *Trench*.

22. Yet there is room. Implying that these classes had embraced the invitation (Matt. 21: 32. Mark 12: 37, last clause. John 7: 48, 49), and beautifully expressing the longing that should fill the hearts of ministers to see their Master's table filled. — *J. F. and D.* The palace is large, and the guest-room: "neither nature nor grace endures a vacuum." — *Alford*. The room is indeed as vast as the merits of his atonement, capacious as heaven itself. — *Whedon*.

23. Go into the highways and hedges. Highways and hedges outside the city altogether: historically, the heathen, sunk in the lowest depths of spiritual wickedness, as being "without Christ, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world"

and hedges, and compel¹ them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say unto you, That none² of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

¹ Ps. 110: 3. ² Prov. 1: 24. Matt. 21: 43. Heb. 12: 25.

(Eph. 2: 12); generally, all such still. Thus this parable *prophetically* contemplates the extension of the kingdom of God to the whole world, and *spiritually* directs the gospel invitations to be carried to the lowest strata, and be brought in contact with the outermost circles of human society. — *J. F. and B.* The parable, hitherto historic, becomes prophetic here; for it declares how God had a larger purpose of grace than could be satisfied by the coming in of a part and remnant of the Jewish people; that he had prepared a feast, at which more should sit down than they, — founded a church with room in it for Gentile as for Jew, — those, too, being fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. — *Trench.* Compel them to come in. This expression must be carefully interpreted. It does not sanction any literal compulsion or force in pressing the gospel on men's acceptance. Least of all does it sanction the least approach to intolerance or persecution of men because of their religious opinions. Bishop Pearce says, "Compel them by arguments, not by force. The nature of the parable shows this plainly. It was a feast to which they were invited." — *Ryle.* Not as if they would make the "excuses" of the first class, but because it would be hard to get them over two difficulties. (1) "We are not in fit company for such a feast." (2) "We have no proper dress, and are ill in order for such a presence." How fitly does this represent the difficulties and fears of the *sincere*! How is this met? "Take no excuse: make them come as they are; bring them along with you." What a directory for ministers of Christ! — *J. F. and B.*

24. I say unto you that none. Our Lord here appears to throw off the veil of the parable, and proclaim the supper *his own*, intimating that when transferred and transformed into its final glorious form, and the refusers themselves would give all for another opportunity, *he* will not allow one of them to taste it. — *J. F. and B.* He that sits not down with Christ in this feast below will never sit down with Christ, and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in that rich festival which is above. — *Cummings.*

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. It is as common in the East for a rich man to give a feast to the poor, the maimed, and the blind, as it is in England for a nobleman to entertain men of his own degree. Does he wish to gain some temporal or spiritual blessing? he orders his head servant to prepare a feast for one or two hundred poor guests. Messengers are then despatched into the streets and lanes to inform the indigent that on such a day rice and curry will be given to all who are there at the appointed time. Long before the hour the visitors may be seen bending their steps towards the house. There goes the old man who is scarcely able to move his palsied limbs, while he talks to himself about better days; and there the despised widow moves with a hesitating step. There the *sanyasi* or *pandaras* boldly brushes along, and scowls upon all who offer the least impediment to his progress. These objects, suffering under every possible disease of our nature, congregate together, without a single kindred association excepting the one which occupies their expectations. What a motley scene is that given in such a village! — *Roberts.*

II. Salvation not compulsion. "Well, then," said a sceptic to me on one occasion, "why is the world not saved?" — "My friend," said I, "you misconceive the power required to convert souls." There was a little boy in the room; and I illustrated my meaning by saying, "Suppose I will that that little boy leave the room. There are two ways in which I could give effect to that will. I could take him in my arms, and by superior muscular force remove him; or I could take him on my knee, speak lovingly and persuasively to him, in order to induce him to leave the room himself. If I adopted the former, I should merely have removed his body; his volition would be against me, and he would feel that I had done him violence. If I succeeded in the latter, I should have influenced his mind; and he himself would use his own limbs, and with a happy smile depart." — *Dr. Thomas.*

III. Arguments for delay. It is related of Alcibiades the poet, that from every season of the year he took arguments to give a new title to his intemperance. The spring (said he) required liberal drinking, in sign of joy for the renovation of nature; the summer, to temper the heat, and refresh our drought; 'twas due to autumn, as dedicated to the vintage; and winter required it, to expel the cold that would congeal the blood and spirits. Thus he pleaded for the allowance of his excess. And thus men, in the several ages of life (which are correspondent to the seasons of the year), have some excuses to delay repentance, and give some color to their contumacy in neglecting

salvation. The vanity of childhood, the pleasures of youth, the business of middle age, the infirmities of old age, are plausible pretences to put off the seeking the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof." — *Dr. Bates.*

IV. Excused from what? From heaven, from God, from the care and love of our heavenly Father, from the company of angels, from a holy life, from the highest happiness, from the great usefulness. Who wants to be excused?

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 16.) The gospel is a *feast*, joyful, abundant, satisfying, with good company and a welcome.

2. (Verse 17.) Christ is always ready to receive us: we need never wait for a revival or for further invitation.

3. (Verse 18.) Wise and true men inquire into the *reasons* for their conduct, which are very different from the excuses men give.

4. There are no good excuses for rejecting Christ.

5. Think *from what* the sinner asks to be excused.

6. Pride keeps many from the gospel.

7. (Verse 19.) Business prevents many from becoming Christians.

8. (Verse 20.) Pleasure keeps many from eternal life.

9. Home companionships prevent many.

10. (Verse 21.) The more needy we are, the more welcome. None need stay away because not fit to come. Christ will make us fit if we will come.

11. (Verse 23.) We should use all persuasion and every good influence to draw men to Christ.

12. If we reject Christ's invitation, the time will come when he will grant our petition, and excuse us from life forevermore.

LESSON III. — OCTOBER 20, 1878.

THE PRODIGAL SON. — LUKE 15: 11-24.

TIME. A.D. 30; winter or early spring. Jesus thirty-three years old.

PLACE. Perea beyond Jordan, on Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of the Roman Empire (17th year); Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa (5th year); Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee (34th year).

THE CONNECTION.

This lesson was spoken in close connection with the last. Jesus was preaching in the region of Bethabara, beyond Jordan, near the fords of the river over to Jericho. In this place of travel and concourse, with its custom-houses, there would naturally be many publicans and sinners, who were attracted by the preaching of Jesus. "Orpheus is said to have drawn savage beasts around him by the charms of music; but our Lord so charmed the world by his preaching, that he drew to him publicans and sinners more brutal than the beasts." — *Guthrie.* The Pharisees, not perceiving that he received sinners in order to make them into saints, but imagining it was from sympathy with their characters, murmured at his course. The self-righteous — these whose goodness is in outward respectability — are now condemnatory of disreputable sinners. To justify his course, and to draw men to salvation through the infinite love of God, Jesus spoke three parables, — "the lost sheep," "the lost piece of money," and "the prodigal son." The owner of the sheep is God in Christ the Good Shepherd, seeking the stupid sinner; the woman in "the lost piece of money" is the Holy Spirit, seeking with his light the unconscious sinner; the father in "the prodigal son" is the heavenly Father, seeking the wandering and reckless sinner.

11 ¶ And he said, A certain man
had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said
to his father, Father, give me the

EXPLANATORY.

11. And he said. If we might venture here to make comparisons, as we do among the sayings of men, this parable of the Lord would rightly be called the *crown and pearl of all his parables.* — *Stier.* Never certainly in human language was so much — such a world of love and wisdom and ten-

portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them *his* living.¹

13 And not many days after the

younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

¹ Mark 12: 44.

derness—compressed into such few immortal words. Every line, every touch, of the picture is full of beautiful, eternal significance.—*Farrar*. A certain man. Our heavenly Father, the Creator and Possessor of all.—*Alford*. Two sons. Not in any direct or primary sense, the Jews and Gentiles: that there may be an ulterior application to this effect, is owing to the parable grasping the *great central truths* of which Jew and Gentile were, in their relation, illustrations. The two parties standing in the foreground of the parabolic mirror are the *scribes and Pharisees* as the elder son, the publicans and sinners as the younger,—all *Jews*, all belonging to God's family.—*Alford*. In the younger son is a pattern of all those who, whether Jews or Gentiles, have widely departed from God, and, after having tasted the misery which follows upon all departure from him, have by his grace been brought back to him, as to the one source of blessedness and life; while in the elder brother is seen either a narrow form of real righteousness, or, accepting his words to be only his own account of himself, of Pharisaical self-righteousness,—one righteous in his own sight, not in the Lord's.—*Trench*.

12. The younger. I believe that the younger son was meant to be a type of all unconverted sinners, and that his return to his father's house was an emblem of true repentance.—*Ryle*. This part of the parable divides itself into three parts,—(1) his sin, (2) his misery, (3) his penitence. His sin (verses 12, 13) consists in a desire to depart from his father's house and control, and to set up for himself, to live a life of what the carnal man calls *liberty*.—*Alford*. The portion of goods. There is reference here to the laws both of Jews and Romans. In this they agreed, that they did not allow the father of a family the voluntary distribution of his whole estate, but allotted a certain portion—one-half as much as the elder's portion—to the younger son (Deut. 21: 16). The young man, therefore, only desired the immediate possession of that fortune, which, according to the common course of things, must in a few years devolve to him.—*Parkhurst*. What does this request mean, when we come to give it its spiritual significance? It is the expression of man's desire to be independent of God, to be a God to himself (Gen. 3: 5), and to lay out his life according to his own will and for his own pleasure. It is man growing weary of living upon God and upon his fulness, and desiring to take the ordering of his life into his own hands, and believing that he can be a fountain of blessedness to himself. All the subsequent sins of the younger son are included in this one, as in their germ,—are but the unfolding of this the sin of sins.—*Trench*. Divided unto them his living; i.e., the estate, the possessions on which they lived. It would have little profited to retain him at home against his will, who had already in heart become strange to that home: rather he will let the young man discover, by bitter experience, the folly of his request. Such, at least, is the dealing of God: he has constituted man a spiritual being, that is, a being with a will; and when his service no longer appears a perfect freedom, and man promises himself something better elsewhere, he is allowed to make the trial. He shall discover, and, if need be, by most painful proof, that the only true freedom is freedom in God; that to depart from him is not to throw off the yoke, but to exchange a light yoke for a heavy one, and one gracious master for a thousand imperious tyrants and lords.—*Trench*.

13. Not many days after. A certain interval of time elapses before he actually forsakes his father's house. It is a fine and delicate touch,—the apostasy of the heart, as St. Bernard here well observes, often running before the apostasy of the life. The divergence of the sinner's will and God's does not immediately appear. This, however, cannot be for long.—*Trench*. Gathered all together. His means were now all in a movable form, not in real estate; and he was fully prepared for a profligate squander.—*Whedon*. By this gathering together of all, and departing, seems intimated the collecting, on man's part, of all his energies and powers, with the deliberate determination of getting, through their help, all the gratification he can out of the world,—the open preference of the creature to the Creator.—*Trench*. Far country. His next purpose is a due distance, where the will of God shall never seem to reach him, and, if possible, beyond the reach of his eye.—*Whedon*. Wasted his substance. His property. That is wasted which fails of the true use for which it was made. The sinner's substance is wasted, when his character, his faculties, God's promises and helps,—all that could fit him for usefulness and heaven,—are used for selfish purposes, and he fails of the great purposes for which he was created. Riotous living. The word here rendered *riotous* is used both in Latin and Greek, and expresses the utmost abandonment of character, and is, in fact, the original of the English word "sot."—*Whedon*. Some have applied this *riotous living* chiefly to wanton and dissipated sinners. It does apply to them, but it applies also to all sinners; for they do with spir-

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine¹ in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country;

and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks² that the swine³ did eat: and no man gave unto him.

¹ Amos 8: 11, 12. ² Isa. 44: 20. Hos. 12: 1. ³ Ps. 73: 22.

It is a sad thing that riotous men do with earthly things. They waste, in things which endure for a moment, their Bibles, their sabbaths, the influences of the Spirit, their religious training, all their heavenly inheritance.

14. Spent all. At length every thing conspires against him. Just as he had spent all, a mighty famine arose. How bitterly sinners are punished, even in this life! How soon their own resources fail them in time of want! nay, their resources are gone before the extreme want comes on. They have spent all before the mighty famine has begun. In the East, the famine often comes from the indolence and neglect of the people, and among such, it would seem, he had cast his lot. — *Jacobus*. A mighty famine. A famine of truth and love, and all whereby the spirit of man indeed lives. There need be no outward distresses to bring on a sense of this famine. In the palaces of kings, at the tables of the rich, the immortal soul may be famishing, yea, ready to perish with hunger. — *Trench*. Began to be in want. Sin is a hard master, and the servants of sin always find it out sooner or later, to their cost. Unconverted people are never really happy. Under a profession of high spirits and cheerfulness, they are often ill at ease within. Thousands of them are sick at heart, dissatisfied with themselves, weary of their own ways, and thoroughly uncomfortable. There is a famine within, however much they may try to conceal it. They are "in want." He that "soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." No wonder that St. Paul said, "What profit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" (Gal. 6: 8. Rom. 6: 21.) — *Ryle*.

15. Joined himself to a citizen. Fastened, or pinned himself upon. Hungry and famishing, he did not return home, but sought relief in other ways still in sin. He with all his misery was not a "citizen," but a stranger, in that far land. He did not feel himself at home, nor naturalize himself there. The other was well to do; the famine had not touched him: herein how far more miserable indeed, though he knew it not, than he who "began to be in want"! For there is hope for the sinner so long as he feels himself a miserable alien in the land of sin: his case is becoming hopeless, when he has made himself "a citizen" there, when he is troubled with no longings after a lost paradise, after a better land that he has left behind. But how shall we understand his joining himself to the citizen of that far country? The sinner sells himself to the world: he entangles himself more deeply in it. Our Lord gives us a hint here of that awful mystery in the downward progress of souls, by which he who begins by using the world to be a servant to minister to his pleasures, submits in the end to a reversing of the relationship between them, so that the world uses him as its drudge, and sin as its slave. He becomes cheap in the sight of that very world for the sake of which he has forfeited all. — *Trench*. Sent him to feed swine. The business of the Devil's servants is to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; and that is no better than feeding noisy, greedy, dirty swine. — *Henry*. Men often run into riot and drunkenness, and baser sins, to try and deaden the hunger of their souls.

16. He fain. Major says that this expression does not mean that he desired and was unable to gratify his desire. It rather signifies, "He was glad. — he was only too happy." — *Ryle*. But all that he could hope was just to fill his belly. None but God can satisfy the longings of the immortal soul. — *Trench*. Husks: *lit.*, little horn, a diminutive from *κέρας*. It is the pod of the carob-tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*). "This tree is common in Syria: it produces long slender pods shaped like a horn or sickle, containing a sweetish pulp, and several brown shining seeds like beans. These pods are sometimes used as food by the poorer classes in the East, and swine are commonly fed with them." — *Robinson*. "Horace alludes to living upon husks, as upon vile food" (Ep. II. i. 23). Pliny calls them the food of pigs (*N. H.* xxiii. 79). They are still used in Spain, &c., as food for cattle, and were often given to horses by British soldiers in the peninsular war. They are imported into Britain, and called locust-beans by the farmers. — *Biblical Museum*. No man gave unto him; i.e., gave him good satisfying food. The husks he had before him, and could take; but any thing that could satisfy the soul was not to be found in that land. The whole description is wonderful, and for nothing more than the evident relation in which his punishment stands to his sin. "He who would not as a son, be treated liberally by his father, is compelled to be the servant and bond-

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him,

Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am now unworthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a

1 Ps. 32: 5.

slave of a foreign master; he who would not be ruled by God is compelled to serve the Devil; he who would not dwell among brethren and princes is obliged to be the servant and companion of brutes; he who would not feed on the bread of angels, petitions in his hunger for the husks of the swine." — *Trench.*

17. **Came to himself.** These words imply that he had been beside himself, acting the part of a madman and a fool. Sin is here represented as madness; and who acts so contrary to sound reason and the reality of things as a sinner? — *Guthrie.* To come to one's self, and to come to God, are one and the same thing. — *Trench.* As one awaking from a dream, he comes to a consciousness of his true state. **Hired servants of my father.** Not the true children of God, but all the lesser powers and things which serve God; nature, animals, even men "who do their work rather in the spirit of servants than of sons." **Bread enough.** Even these have enough to eat, — not the higher joys and blessings of children and heirs, but the peace and comfort which belong to their lower natures.

18. **I will arise.** Comparing his state with theirs, what does the prodigal determine now? How many, even at this point, do not determine as he does! They betake them to some other citizen of that far country, who promises them a little better fare or less contemptuous treatment. Or it may be they learn to dress their husks so that they shall look like human food; and they then deny that they are the fodder of swine. Or glorying in their shame, and wallowing in the same sty with the beasts they feed, they proclaim that there was never intended to be any difference between the food of men and of swine. But it is otherwise with him. "*I will arise.*" We may picture him to ourselves as having sat long upon the ground, revolving the extreme misery of his condition. — *Trench.* **Go to my father.** Against whom he had sinned, but who was his father still. God is our Father in one sense, however unworthy we are to be his children. There is none else to whom the sinner can go. He *must* go home. **I have sinned, &c.** We may injure ourselves by our evil, we may wrong our neighbor, but, strictly speaking, we can *sin* only against God; and the recognition of our evil as first and chiefly an offence against him is of the essence of all true repentance, and distinguishes it broadly from many other kinds of sorrow which may follow on evil deeds. When we come to give these words their higher application, the two acknowledgments, "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee," merge into one, "I have sinned against thee, my Father in heaven." Not here alone, but throughout all Scripture, this willingness to confess is ever noted as a sign of a true repentance begun, even as the sinner's refusal to humble himself in confession before God is the sure note of a continued obduracy. — *Trench.*

19. **No more worthy.** His confession of unworthiness shows his humility, which always belongs to true repentance. To a true penitent the very sense of a father's presence and a father's love makes sin more intensely hateful, as committed against him. — *Jacobus.* **Son . . . hired servants.** He had no adequate sense of his father's kindness. He was far more kind than he had dared to hope he would be, — just as no sinner comes to God with a just and adequate view of his character, but *always* finds him more merciful than he had dared to hope. — *Barnes.*

20. **And he arose.** Action is the very life of "repentance unto salvation." Feelings, and tears, and remorse, and wishes, and resolutions, are all useless, until they are accompanied by action and a change of life. In fact, they are worse than useless. Insensibly they sear the conscience and harden the heart. — *Ryle.* Yet the tenderness of the father's heart would not have saved the son from the dying of famine, a miserable swineherd, if he had not said, "I will arise and go to my father," and done what he said. — *Whedon.* **Yet a great way off.** Though there may be very much of ignorance in them still, far too slight a view of the evil of their sin, or of the holiness of the God with whom they have to deal, yet he meets them, notwithstanding, with the evidences of his mercy and reconciled love. — *Trench.* **Had compassion.** The atonement was not made to soften the heart of God: it was given by God's tender heart to remove the difficulty which inflexible justice placed in his way. — *Whedon.* **Ran.** The return of the sinner is expressed by the word

great way¹ off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and ²fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven,² and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring³ forth the best robe,

and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For⁴ this my son was dead,⁵ and is alive⁶ again; he was⁷ lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

¹ Acts 2: 39. Eph. 2: 13, 17. ² Ps. 51: 4. ³ Zech. 3: 3, 5. ⁴ ver. 32. ⁵ Eph. 2: 1; 5: 14. Rev. 3: 1. ⁶ Rom. 6: 11, 13. ⁷ ch. 19: 10. Ezek. 34: 4, 16.

going (verse 18), but God's coming to the sinner by *running*. God maketh greater haste to the sinner than the sinner doth to God. — *Farindon*. Kissed him. The kiss is something more than an evidence of affection, being the significant, and in the East well-understood, pledge of reconciliation and peace (Gen. 33: 4. 2 Sam. 14: 33. Ps. 2: 12). And this he does, because such they need at this moment, to assure them that notwithstanding their moral loathsomeness and defilement and misery, they are accepted in Christ Jesus; to convince them of that which it is so hard for the sinner to believe, which it is indeed the great work of faith to realize, that God has put away their sin, and is pacified toward them. — *Trench*. The representations of God the Father, in the most splendid paintings of the ancient masters, are worse than in bad taste. Yet he has suffered less injustice from painters than from preachers, by representing God in dark and gloomy colors, with an expression of stern severity, and as more prone to punish than to pardon. — *Guthrie*.

21. And the son said. Note that it is after, and not before, the kiss of reconciliation, that this confession finds place; for, the more the sinner knows and tastes of the love of God, the more he grieves ever to have sinned against that love. The truest and best repentance follows, and does not precede, the sense of forgiveness. He does not, indeed, say all that he had once intended, — he does not say, "*Make me as one of thy hired servants*;" for this was the one troubled element of his repentance, this purpose of shrinking back from his father's love, and from the free grace which would restore to him all; and in his dropping of these words, in his willingness to be blessed by his father to the uttermost, if such is his father's pleasure, there is beautiful evidence that the grace which he has already received he has not received in vain. Bengel thinks it possible that his father cut him short, and so took these words out of his mouth. And St. Bernard exhorts the penitent still to persist in taking the place of a servant. But this is false humility, of which we meet so much, and which often is so mightily extolled. It is the truest humility, when bidden to go up higher, to go. It is true humility in the prodigal, at his father's bidding, to accept at once the position of a son. — *Trench*.

22. The father said. This is to re-instate the son in all the privileges which his crimes had lost. The best robe. The rags of the swineherd are stripped off, the best robe in the house is thrown over his naked shoulders; "a beautiful type of that best robe in God's house, a garment "fairer than ever angel wore," as in Isa. 61: 10, "For he hath clothed me in the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." A ring. Rings were used of old as seals, a type of those graces whereby the Holy Spirit seals believers unto the day of redemption (an earnest of a larger inheritance reserved in heaven for them). This ring, as the diamond on its golden hoop flashes with many colors, may have other meanings, signifying here the espousals between Christ and his Church. — *Guthrie*. Shoes. In those days servants and slaves wore no shoes, and were thus distinguished from the members of the family. This was, therefore, tantamount to a declaration that he was not to be regarded as a servant, but as a son. — *Guthrie*.

23. The fatted calf. For a feast of joy, expressing the festal joy and rejoicing which is in heaven: at the sinner's return, and no less in the Church on earth, and in his own heart also. This is the very nature of true joy, — that it runs over, that it desires to impart itself; and, if this be true of the joy on earth, how much more of the yet hollier joy in heaven! — *Trench*.

24. Was dead. The state of sin is ever regarded in the Scriptures as death. The sinner is dead to the realities of life, to light and truth, and love of heaven. A tree is dead when it does not fulfil the natural functions of a tree, producing leaves and fruit and growth. The soul is dead in which are wanting the growth and fruits and principles for which it was made. Is alive again. Has come back to his natural state of holiness and love for which God made us. Was lost. Another expression of the sinner's state. He is far from home, from his father, from his true life,

hungry, perishing, and does not know the way back alone. But God finds him, and brings him back. No wonder they were joyful. There is no joy like that over a returning sinner.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Wasted his living. I once visited a middle-aged man, who, when I was about leaving the house, asked me to come into a room alone with him, and pray that he might be saved from the power of strong drink. He begged me to save him. He was lost: a short time more of his drinking habits would bring him to the grave. Not long after, I was calling on a neighbor of his, and was shown a picture of a most beautiful young man, full of promise, of talent, of good disposition. It was the same young man. He had wasted his living. How is it that the young will not take warning?

II. Coming to himself. One day during the war, a soldier in one of the forts around Washington was singing that sweet hymn:—

"I was a wandering sheep,
I did not love the fold,

I did not love my Father's voice,
I would not be controlled."

Sergeant Langdale (of whom an officer bore this testimony to me, that he was the best Christian in the army), hearing him, said, "Friend, sing it in the present tense." And he sang,—

"I am a wandering sheep,
I do not love the fold,

I do not love my Father's voice,
I will not be controlled."

It was the truth; and it made a deep impression, and helped him to come to himself.

It is all **PRACTICAL**.

LESSON IV.—OCTOBER 27, 1878.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.—LUKE 16: 19-31.

TIME. A. D. 30. Winter or early spring.

PLACE. Perea beyond Jordan, near Bethabara, where John baptized.

RULERS. Tiberius Caesar, emperor of Roman Empire; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judaea; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

THE CONNECTION.

Christ was still on his journey in Perea, wending his way slowly towards Jerusalem. After the touching parable of the Prodigal Son, he warns the Pharisees against covetousness by a parable and its application. But they derided him; and he goes on, in another parable, to warn them against that unbelief which was the source of their sin. They were not luxurious like the rich man in this parable, but their hoarding came from the same root of selfishness and unbelief. This parable is the only passage in Scripture which describes the feelings of the unconverted after death.—Is this a parable, or history? The answer depends very much upon the definition we give of a parable. The parable may be strictly a fictitious narrative, in which symbols are used to represent some other object, as the lost sheep to represent a sinner, or the mustard-seed the gospel. In this sense it is no parable; for the rich man represents not some other self or thing, but his own self; namely, a worldly *rich man*. He is taken as an example of his class. Nor is it a *history* in the sense of a narration of a particular real individual fact. It is not so much a detail of a particular case as a picture of what takes place in thousands of cases.—*Whedon*. Christ in all his parables spoke them according to the truth of those things; so that, whether this be a parable or not, its representations of things relating to the spiritual world and the future are according to fact. It teaches (1) the conscious existence after death; (2) that men enter at death on a degree of their final state; (3) that condition is fixed.

19 There was a certain rich man, | fine linen, and fared sumptuously
which was clothed in purple and | every day:

EXPLANATORY.

19. A certain rich man. His name is not given; for *Dives*, which many suppose to be his proper name, is but the Latin word for *rich man*.—*Whedon*. Purple. This was the costly dye of

Handwritten notes:
The rich man was a Pharisee and a Sadducee.
The rich man was a Pharisee and a Sadducee.
The rich man was a Pharisee and a Sadducee.

... Jesus - God the helper -
created by man & he was cared for of God and
in angels

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich

man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom:¹

¹ Matt. 8: 11.

Lyrian purple, so celebrated at the East. This was exceedingly scarce, being from a rare shell-fish about Tyre, and only a few drops in each fish. The precious article and art are entirely lost. This was the outer garment or robe. — *Jacobus*. It was accounted the royal color. There was as much of pride as of luxury in its use. — *Trench*. Fine linen. This linen was chiefly produced of the flax that grew on the banks of the Nile, in Egypt (Prov. 7: 16. Ezek. 27: 7). It was peculiarly soft and white, and was therefore much sought as an article of luxury. — *Barnes*. Pliny tells of a kind of *byssoes* (fine linen) which was exchanged for its weight in gold. Its glory was in its dazzling whiteness. The linen was the inner vest, the purple the outer robe. The blue and white composed a highly-prized combination of colors. — *Trench*. Fared sumptuously. "Lived in jovial splendor." — *Parkhurst*. Ate and drank the best and dearest. — This much is said of him to show his ample ability to help the poor if he would. — *Jacobus*.

And what was his crime? A lazarus lying at his gate, and lying unrelieved. Nor is he even accused of being, as he is sometimes called, for instance in the heading of the chapter in our Bibles, "a glutton." To call him such "a Sir Epicure Mammon," serves only to turn the edge of the parable. For, on the contrary, there is nothing to make us think him other than a reputable man, one of whom none could say worse than that he loved to dwell at ease, that he desired to remove far off from himself all things painful to the flesh, to surround himself with all things pleasurable. — *Trench*.

20. Beggar named Lazarus. Lazarus is an abridged form of Eleazar, or Eleazron, which means, "God only his help." In every tongue in Europe, a "lazar" is now regarded as a descriptive name of the poor. It is singular enough the rich man's name is not mentioned, whereas that of the beggar is. In this world the name of the rich man was sounded by a thousand trumpets. In the heavenly world all is reversed. Greatness alone is prominent now: goodness alone will be prominent there. — *Cummings*. Laid at his gate. Deposited there with the hope of attracting the rich man's pity. The portals of the wealthy were the customary resort for mendicants. Full of sores. Ulcerated; one of the natural effects of a mendicant's life.

21. He desired, *but in vain*, to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table (Judg 1: 7). Even these were not thrown to him; at least, not in such a measure that he could be satisfied with them. Shut out from human fellowship and human pity, he found sympathy only from the dumb animals: the dogs came and licked his sores. Probably the animals without a master, that wander through the streets of an Eastern city (Ps. 59: 15, 16). Medicinal virtue was in ancient times popularly attributed to the tongue of a dog; being moist and smooth, it would certainly not exasperate, but rather assuage, the pain of a wound. The circumstance seems rather mentioned to enhance the cruelty and neglect of the rich man, and to set them in the strongest light, — man neglected his fellow-man with an unmoved heart, yet was it a misery which even the beasts had pity on.

There is nothing expressly said concerning the moral condition of Lazarus, — his faith, his patience, his resignation to the will of God. Yet these from the sequel must all be assumed, since his poverty of itself would never have brought him to Abraham's bosom. We may certainly assume that he suffered after a godly sort. But for this, his sufferings themselves, however great, would have profited him nothing, would have brought him not a whit nearer the kingdom of God. — *Trench*.

22. The Beggar died. Lazarus died first. The ripe is oftenest taken. Saints are frequently gathered first. — *Cummings*. Was carried by the angels. The Jews held the opinion that the spirits of the righteous were conveyed by angels to heaven at their death. Our Saviour speaks in accordance with this opinion; and as he expressly affirms the fact, it seems as proper that it should be taken literally, as when it was said the rich man died, and was buried. — *Barnes*. Abraham's bosom. Every Jew understood by "Abraham's bosom," a place of perfect repose, communion and intimacy with the great and good in the age to come. We leave behind us at death that only which enables the soul to communicate with the outward and material world, having no use for it in that world of spirit in which we wait for the resurrection of the body. All that constitutes the

FOURTH QUARTER.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime⁴ receivdest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

25. Son, remember. This one word is a vivid symbol of the rich man's misery. Memory is the faculty that will survive all. The rich sufferer remembered all in that place of agony: he remembered that he not only sacrificed his soul in order to accumulate, but never distributed to others who needed what he accumulated. Memory, like a whispering-gallery, returned the deeds of a lifetime in crashes of insufferable thunder; each sin reproduced itself, and each black deed cast its cold and horrible shadow on the spirit of him who had committed it. Lost opportunities were not the least bitter recollections of the lost rich man. Let memory alone survive, and it will strike ten thousand scorpion stings into the soul of the lost. — *Cummings*. **In thy lifetime thy good things.** Of this there are two explanations: (1) It may mean that the good things, the object of his life, were worldly goods, and he gained them. He had not sought salvation and eternal life, and why should he expect to have them? As if Abraham had said to him, "Son, in the world you sowed to worldly good, and you reaped worldly good. You did not sow to eternal life, and no harvest in eternal life can you possess." (2) The other meaning is, that for whatever good the rich man had done in the world, God had given him his reward. God is just; and, if he had performed

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither¹ can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They² have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto

¹ Ezek. 28: 24. ² Isa. 34: 16. John 5: 39.

any good actions, God had given him worldly good as his reward for them; for they were done with worldly motives, and now he had no further claim or reason of hope. And it is true of sinners generally, that if they do good deeds they are rewarded for them as certainly as God's children are. Most men do do some good, but it is with worldly motives, and therefore has a worldly reward: only heavenly motives have a heavenly reward. Even of the Pharisees Christ says, "Verily they have their reward." And this accounts in some measure for the prosperity of the wicked: they are receiving their good things. Business morality has business reward, worldly diligence has worldly reward. On the other hand, the righteous ever have a mixture of evil; and for that they receive "evil things." "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," for many are their sins. But their sins are not with the whole heart; they are temporary, and against the bent of their mind, and therefore their evil things come in this world, for the evil is of this world. And a Christian no more than a sinner can sin without being punished in a degree for it.

26. A great gulf. A great *chasm*,—a vast impassable depth. This is directly opposed to the doctrine of purgatory taught by the Papists; for souls in torment *cannot* pass to the regions of the blessed. **Fixed;** had been fixed firmly, forever. **Would pass.** It is here plainly stated (in both forms, to and fro), that there is no possibility of passing the boundary in that other world. How vain and anti-scriptural is the dream of those who teach that there will be a final *restoration* of the lost,—or rather, their *exaltation* to heaven! This would assert that the gulf *can be passed*, when our Lord in this parable plainly means to teach that it cannot be. — *Jacobus*. Whatever other fixed gulf there may be, it is certain that the permanence of character is such a gulf of separation. The one man's character was fixed in evil, the other permanent in good; and in that world there is no change. The good will not fall into evil, the evil will not choose good; but the gulf will continually grow wider and wider.

27. That thou wouldest send him. Some have found the evidence of a better mind beginning, and the proof that suffering was already doing its work in him, was awakening in him the slumbering germ of good. With this view, were it the right one, would of necessity be connected his own ultimate restoration: a doctrine which will always find favor with all those who have no deep insight into the evil of sin, no earnest view of the task and responsibilities of life; especially when, as too often, they are bribed to hold it by a lurking consciousness that they themselves are not earnestly striving to enter at the strait gate. But the rich man's request grows out of another root. There lies in it a secret justifying of himself, and accusing of God. What a bitter reproach against God and against the old economy is here involved! "If only I had been sufficiently warned, if only God had given me sufficiently clear evidence of these things, of the need of repentance, of this place as the goal of a sensual worldly life, I had never come hither. But, though I was not duly warned, let at least my brethren be so." — *Trench*. May there not have been other motives? May he not have deprecated the introduction of his brethren to his presence, because they would remind him more vividly than ever of the sins they had perpetrated together? It is as if, addressing Abraham, he had said, "Save me from the presence of those I misled. Oh, let not their faces come before me in the abodes of the lost! There the victim will curse me as the destroyer." — *Cummings*.

28. Five brethren. No stress is to be laid on this number; only there were many left. **May testify unto them.** May bear *witness* to them, or may inform them of what is my situation, and the dreadful consequences of the life that I have led. — *Barnes*.

29. They have Moses and the prophets. All the Old Testament. Abraham's answer is brief and almost stern, rebuking, as was fit, this evil thought of his heart: "They are warned; they have enough to keep them from your place of torment, if only they will use it. They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them." — *Trench*. This parable teaches that the doctrine of the

them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If¹

they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will² they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

¹ 2 Cor. 4: 3. ² John 12: 10, 11.

immortality of the soul, of the future sufferings of the lost and the future joys of the saved, was taught in the writings of Moses and the prophets. If these five brethren were to consult Moses and the prophets, it is implied that they would so far understand them as to see the way that leads to heaven, and avoid the path that leads to hell. If Moses and the prophets were sufficient to enlighten men, and save their souls, still more are Moses, the prophets, the apostles, and the evangelists sufficient. — *Cummings*.

30. If one from the dead . . . they will repent. This is man's false judgment of divine things. True repentance is not to come from alarms and apparitions, or from miraculous works. These cannot convert. Many a man has thought so. But Christ himself has risen from the dead, to testify to men, lest they also go to that place of torment; and they will not even be persuaded. — *Jacobus*.

31. Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. These words demand to be accurately considered. Dives had said, "they will repent;" Abraham replies, "they will not even be persuaded." Dives had said, "If one went unto them from the dead;" Abraham, with a prophetic glance at the world's unbelief in far greater matters, makes answer, "No, not if one rose from the dead." He, in fact, is saying to him, "A far greater act than you demand would be ineffectual for producing a far slighter effect." — *Trench*. Men are apt to desire more influences for their salvation than God has given them. They have every opportunity and help, and yet they complain that probation is too short, or punishment too long. It is as if they said, "O Lord, we have light enough, but we will not serve you without more light. We have time enough, but we will not serve you without more time." But the doctrine of the parable is for them. If men will not be Christians with the advantages they have, they would not with greater advantages. A thousand new revelations would not make them God's children. A new revelation must (1) bring more light, or (2) stronger proofs, or (3) more powerful motives. (1) As to more light, a new revelation might bring it, but it would either leave them unchanged, — as devils see heaven and hell with perfect clearness, and yet remain devils, — or it would compel to an outward form of virtue while the heart was unchanged. If men, seeing the two ways as clearly as they may now, will not choose the right, nothing can make them. (2) As to stronger proofs of its authority as from God, a new revelation cannot have them. All that men can conceive of proof is given for the Bible, — Christ from the dead, miracles, prophecies, results, revelation of mysteries, a perfect standard. (3) A new revelation cannot give stronger sanctions. The principal motives are hope, fear, duty, and love. We cannot conceive of any stronger degree of these than are given in the Bible, — no better heaven to hope for, no more dreadful hell to escape, stronger sanctions of duty in the law, in conscience, in God as Creator, Father, Helper, Friend; no greater love than is found in God in Jesus Christ. If men will not yield to these, no power in this world or the next can make them truly good.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. John Vine Hall, the father of Rev. Newman Hall, read Paine's "Age of Reason," and became an infidel. Afterwards, being convinced of his error, he took the book out of his pocket where he had been accustomed to carry it, and threw it into the fire, exclaiming, "Tom Paine, you've cheated me; you are a liar: go to the flames." So all in this world that keeps us from living for Christ and righteousness, we will find at last has cheated us by its glittering deceptions.

II. The survival of memory. Many of us have known persons who have had an experience similar to that so beautifully described by DeQuincey, of a lady who in her youth was nearly drowned, "having descended within the abyss of death, and looked into its secrets as far perhaps as ever human eye can have looked that had permission to return. At a certain stage of this descent a blow seemed to strike her; phosphoric radiance sprang forth from her eyeballs; and immediately a mighty theatre expanded in her brain. In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, every act, every design of her past life lived again, arraying themselves not as a succession, but as parts of a co-existence."

III. Pythagoras represented life by the letter Y, because it early divides into two ways. In my childhood, my mother used on Sundays sometimes to draw a like picture of two diverging ways, — a broad way leading downward to destruction, and a narrow path leading upward to heaven. Then she showed us how each day we lived in the wrong way it was farther across to the right way, with more

obstacles, more dangers, and less likelihood that we ever should go in the heavenly way. The ways kept diverging, till at last the separation would become an impassable gulf.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 19.) A man's worldly condition is no test of his state in the sight of God. — *Byle*.
2. Worldliness and selfishness, even without crime, merit future punishment.
3. The future world is the fruit of life in this world.
4. (Verse 22.) The rest and comfort of the future will amply repay the pious poor.
5. Happiness and misery follow immediately after death.
6. (Verse 23.) The certainty and terribleness of future punishment.
7. (Verse 24.) The assurance that friends will recognize each other in the other world.
8. Souls do not die with the body.
9. The soul is conscious after death.
10. The unconverted find out the value of the soul after death when it is too late.
11. If men will not be Christians with the opportunities they have, they would not if they had greater.

LESSON V.—NOVEMBER 3, 1878.

THE TEN LEPERS.—LUKE 17: 11-19.

TIME. Autumn of A. D. 29. This passage belongs to the same time as the return of the 70 (ch. 10; Lesson IX. Third Quarter), and is not placed by Luke in the order of its occurrence. It connects in the narrative with ch. 9: 51.

PLACE. On his last journey through Samaria and Galilee.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee (subject to Rome).

INTRODUCTION.

One day as Christ approached a village, ten lepers cried to him from afar, entreating him to have mercy upon them. The circumstances are much the same as in the case of the single leper formerly cured in Galilee. With joyful hearts they hastened on to claim from the priest formal deliverance from their sad estate. All hastened on save one. He lingered, and then turned back, even to the postponement of the full measure of his happiness, that he might pour out the gratitude of a full heart at the feet of his deliverer. This man was a Samaritan. — *Kitto*.

11 And it came to pass, as he | through the midst of Samaria¹ and
went to Jerusalem, that he passed | Galilee.

¹ ch. 9: 51, 52. John 4: 4.

EXPLANATORY.

11. As he went to Jerusalem. Our Lord was now leaving Galilee on his last journey to Jerusalem (ch. 9: 51), to the feast of tabernacles, to be held Oct. 11, A. D. 29. He passed through certain villages of Galilee and Samaria (ch. 10: 1). — *Jacobus*. Through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. From the circumstance that these lepers were a mixed company of Jews and Samaritans, the words rendered *through the midst of Samaria and Galilee* probably mean "between Samaria and Galilee," on the frontiers of both. This seems to be parallel with Matt. 19: 1. The journey mentioned there would lead him *between Samaria and Galilee*. — *Alford*. The Lord travelled due eastward towards Jordan, having Galilee on his left hand, and Samaria on his right; and on reaching the river, he either passed over it at Scythopolis, where we know there was a bridge, recrossing the river near Jericho, or kept on the western bank till he reached that city, where presently we find him (ch. 18: 35). — *Trench*. This course would avoid any annoyance from the Samaritans, which they would have very likely been subjected to had they passed directly through Samaria, as those who were going up to the feasts often met with vexations and annoyances, and even outrages, in passing through their unfriendly land. Josephus gives an account of the massacre by the Samaritans of a great number of Galilean pilgrims, which happened a little later than this. —

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar¹ off:

13 And they lifted up *their* voices,

and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go show² yourselves unto the priests. And it came to

¹ Lev. 13: 46. ² ch. 5: 14. Lev. 13: 2; 14: 3. Matt. 8: 4.

Jacobus. Samaria. Samaria lay between Galilee and Judæa. It took its name from the principal city, the capital of the ten tribes, built by King Omri, father of Ahab, B. C. 925, on a mountain on hill of the same name. It means a watch-height. In later years the Assyrians, after besieging it, and carrying its inhabitants captive together with all Israel, except perhaps the very dregs of society, introduced colonies in their place from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim. They became incorporated with each other. As these people were a *mixed* race (some deny that they were a mixed race, and say they were pure Gentile), their religion also became a *mixed* religion. The worship of idols was associated with that of the true God. When the Jews returned from the Babylonish captivity, the Samaritans wished to join them in the rebuilding of the temple, but the Jews declined their aid; and from that time there existed the most bitter hostility between them. **Galilee.** The most northerly division of Palestine. It was formerly divided into upper and lower Galilee. Upper Galilee was called Galilee of the "Gentiles," from its having a more mixed population, i.e., less purely Jewish than the other. It was in Galilee that most of the life of our Saviour was passed, and a large part of his mighty works were done. The Galileans spoke a different dialect from that of Judæa, and which was of course counted rude and impure by the inhabitants of Judæa. They were a turbulent and rebellious people, ready on all occasions to rebel against the Roman authority.

12. As he entered (was entering) into a certain village. It is not known what village this was. There met him ten men . . . lepers. Their common misery had drawn them together (2 Kings 7: 3); nay, had even caused them to forget the fierce national antipathy which reigned between Jew and Samaritan. In this border land, too, it was more natural than elsewhere that they should find themselves in one company, and thus a Samaritan had found admission into this forlorn assembly. — *Trench.* As is the custom in the East, this dismal society hovered near the village which they might not enter (Num. 5: 4. Matt. 8: 1); sad emblem of those who behold the blessedness of that heavenly kingdom from which they are forever excluded. — *Whedon.* **Lepers.** For an account of the leprosy, see First Quarter, Lesson VIII., on verse 19. Read Lev. 13 and 14, for the Mosaic enactments respecting it, and its nature and symptoms. See also Exod. 4: 6. Num. 12: 10. 2 Kings 5: 27; 15: 5. 2 Chron. 19: 21. The whole ordinances relating to leprosy were symbolical and typical. This disease was specially selected, as being the most loathsome and incurable of all, to represent the effect of the defilement of sin upon the once pure and holy body of man. The leper was the type of one dead in sin: the same emblems are used in his misery as those of mourning for the dead; the same means of cleansing as for uncleanness through connection with death, and which were never used except on these two occasions. Compare Num. 19: 6, 13, 18, with Lev. 14: 4-7. All this exclusion and mournful separation imported the perpetual exclusion of the abominable and polluted from the true city of God, as declared (Rev. 21: 27). — *Alford.* Leprosy was indeed nothing short of a living death, a poisoning of the springs, a corrupting of all the humors of life; a dissolution, little by little, of the whole body, so that one limb after another actually decayed and fell away. — *Trench.* **Stood afar off.** Being forbidden by the law to approach others: it was a sort of quarantine to prevent the spread of the disease, or the defilement of others. See Lev. 13: 46. Num. 5: 2.

13. And they lifted up their voices. Out of a deep sense of their misery, yet not without hope that a healer was at hand. They were now in earnest to receive the mercy, however at a later period they were slack in giving thanks for it. — *Trench.* **Jesus, Master.** Although they do not yet know the Saviour's Messianic dignity, yet they account him a prophet, mighty in deed and word; their faith is sincere without being perfect. — *Van Oosterzee.* The essence of faith manifests itself in the ten lepers. Faith recognizes in Jesus the only willing and all-sufficient helper, and allows itself to be impelled by life's necessity to take refuge in him.

14. When he saw them. How ready the Saviour always was to grant his mighty healing power when he saw the faintest desire for his help for either bodily or spiritual disease! and have we not every reason to believe that he is just as ready to heal the spiritually sick and leprous now as when he walked upon earth in human form? Go show yourselves unto the priests. The

pass, that, as¹ they went, they were cleansed.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified² God,

16 And fell down on his face at

his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a³ Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

18 There are not⁴ found that re-

¹ 2 Kings 5: 14. Isa. 65: 24. ² Ps. 30: 1, 2. ³ John 4: 39, 42. ⁴ Ps. 106: 13.

law directed that lepers, when they were cured, should show themselves to the Jewish priest, and get a certificate of the cure (see Lev. 14: 1-32). This direction, therefore, to go thither before they were cured, required great faith. They might have objected, "Why send us without the healing that is requisite? Why not cure us first?" So many inquirers demand that they should have new hearts before they will go to Christ and cast themselves upon him. They wait for repentance, faith, convictions, &c. But they must go as they are, or they can never be healed. — *Jacobus*. One of our Lord's first miracles had been the healing of a leper (Matt. 8: 2); then he touched him, and said, "Be thou clean:" now he *sinks*, as it were, *the healing*, and keeps it in the background; and why so? There may have been reasons unknown to us; but one we can plainly see, and that is, to bring out for the Church the lesson which the history yields. In their going away, in the absence of Jesus, they are healed. What need to go back and give him thanks? Here was a trial of their *love: faith* they had, enough to go, and enough to be cleansed; but *love* (with the one exception), gratitude, they had not. — *Alford*. Wonderful and most instructive is the difference in our Lord's dealing with the different sufferers and mourners that are brought in contact with him. How the physician, who is all wisdom and all tenderness, varies his treatment for the varying needs of his patients! how he seems to resist a strong faith, that he may make it stronger yet! how he meets a weak faith, lest it should prove altogether too weak in the trial! how one he forgives first, and heals afterwards, and another, whose heart could only be softened by first receiving an earthly benefit, he first heals and then pardons! — *Trench*. As they went, they were cleansed. The meaning evidently is, that they had not gone far, and that the whole took place within a short time. They had not been to the priests, as some suppose. — *Alford*. Perhaps in the very village itself, they perceived what had taken place in them, — that they were healed. — *Trench*.

15. And one of them . . . turned back. All are glad; but one is both glad and grateful. The thoughts of his benefactor so fill his heart as to drive the priests from his mind. The others will visit the priests to make sure of the result; but whether they ever see their Saviour or not is the least of their concern. Full well they know — as well as the returning Samaritan — that, while they are going to Jerusalem, Jesus will be upon his journey, and slight will be their chance of offering their worship for his mercy. Glorified God. The cleansing extended even to his heart. Both soul and body were regenerated: one from sin, and the other from the most terrible emblem of sin. — *Whedon*. This one returned in the fulness of a grateful heart to give glory to God, and thanks to his great Healer and Saviour, the others meanwhile enduring to carry away the benefit without one thankful acknowledgment, — a sin only too common; for, as Bishop Sanderson says, with allusion to their former crying, "We open our mouths wide till He open his hand; but after, as if the filling of our mouths were the stopping of our throats, so are we speechless and heartless." — *Trench*.

16. Fell down on his face at his feet. In token of his great respect and humble gratitude, and possibly of his recognition of Christ's divine nature. A Samaritan. It gives a special significance to this miracle, and to its place in the Gospel of St. Luke, — the Gospel for the heathen, — that this thankful one should have been no other than a Samaritan, a stranger, therefore, by birth to the covenants of promise, while the nine unthankful were of the seed of Abraham. Thus there spoke out in this circumstance, that the Gentiles (for this Samaritan was no better) were not excluded from the kingdom of God, nay, rather might find a place in it before others who by nature and birth were children of the kingdom; that the ingratitude of these might exclude them, while the faith of those might give to them an abundant entrance into all its blessings. — *Trench*. There may have been a reason for the nine Jews not returning, — that they held the ceremonial duty imposed on them to be paramount, which the Samaritan might not value so highly. That he was going to Mount Gerizim does not appear; from his being found with Jews, he would probably act as a Jew. — *Alford*.

17. Were there not ten cleansed? or, Were not the ten cleansed? Even the Saviour himself, who knew what was in man, who had already had so many proofs of the ingratitude of men, seems to have marvelled here. — *Trench*. Where are the nine? One of the first feelings of the sinner cleansed from sin is a desire to praise his great Benefactor. And a real willingness to obey his com-

turned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19 And he said unto him, Arise,

go thy way: thy¹ faith hath made thee whole.

¹ Matt. 9: 22.

mandments is not inconsistent with a wish to render thanks to him for his mercy. With what singular propriety may this question now be asked, — *Where are the nine?* And what a striking illustration is this of human nature, and of the ingratitude of men! One had come back to give thanks for the favor bestowed on him: the others were heard of no more. So now. When men are restored from dangerous sickness, here and there one comes to give thanks to God; but “where are the nine?” When men are defended from danger, when they are recovered from the perils of the sea, one acknowledges God, and renders him praise. But where are the mass of them? They give no thanks; they offer no praise. They go about their usual employments, to mingle in the scenes of pleasure and of sin, as if nothing had occurred. Few, few of all who have been rescued from “threatening graves” feel their obligation to God, or ever express it. They forget their great Benefactor: perhaps the mention of his name is unpleasant; and they scorn the idea that they are under any obligations to God. Such, alas, is man, ungrateful man! — *Barnes*.

18. *This stranger.* This foreigner by birth; the one who would have been thought to be the least likely to have expressed this gratitude.

19. *Go thy way.* To the priest; for without his certificate he could not again be restored to the society of his friends, or the public worship of God. Having now appropriately expressed your gratitude, go to the priest, and obey the law of God. — *Barnes*. *Thy faith hath made thee whole.* Him he dismisses with a new and a better blessing. The first had reached but to the healing of his body, and that he had in common with the unthankful nine; but gratitude for a lower mercy obtains for him a higher, a peculiar blessing, which is singularly his; which reaches not merely to the springs of bodily health, but to the very fountains of his spiritual being. These also are healed. That which the others missed, to which their bodily healing should have led them up, he has obtained; for to him, and to him only, it is said, “*Go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.*” — *Trench*. Theirs was merely the beholding of the brazen serpent with the outward eyes, but his with the eye of inward faith; and this faith saved him. — *Alford*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. *Gratitude.* A deaf and dumb pupil of the Abbé Sicard, on being asked what he understood by the word “gratitude,” wrote down immediately, “Gratitude is the memory of the heart.” — *Brown's “Philosophy of the Human Mind.”*

II. We may use the words of Socrates to his scholar, who saw in the contemplation of nature only a proof of his own insignificance, and concluded “that the gods had no need of him,” which drew this answer from the sage: “The greater the munificence they have shown in the care of thee, so much the more honor and service thou owest them.” — *Biblical Treasury*.

III. *Where are the nine?* A gentleman of fortune, but a stranger to personal religion, one evening took a solitary walk through part of his grounds. He happened to come near a mean hut, where a poor man lived with a numerous family, who earned their bread by daily labor. He heard a continued and pretty loud voice. Not knowing what it was, curiosity prompted him to listen. The man happened to be at prayer with his family. He heard him giving thanks to God for the goodness of his providence in giving them food to eat, and raiment to put on, and in supplying them with what was necessary and comfortable in the present life. He was struck with astonishment and confusion, and said to himself, “Does this poor man, who has nothing but the meanest fare, and that purchased by severe labor, give thanks to God for his goodness to himself and family, and I, who enjoy ease and honor, and every thing that is pleasant and desirable, have hardly ever bent my knee, or made any acknowledgment to my Maker and Preserver?” This occurrence was the means of bringing him to a real sense of religion. — *Foster*.

IV. *Faith hath made thee whole.* A man once dreamed that he was in a deep pit, sinking fast in the mire, — feet, knees, body, neck, gone down beneath the surface, — when he heard a voice, “*Look up.*” Looking up, he saw a star; and, while gazing at it, he began to rise. Then, congratulating himself on his escape, he turned his eyes from the star to himself; and immediately he began to sink again. All efforts of his own to rise but sank him deeper; and, when almost gone, he again heard the voice, “*Look up.*” Then once more gazing at the heavenly star, he began to rise higher and higher, till he was almost free; then, turning to help himself, and to remove the mire clinging to him

He forgot to look up, and again he sank. Once more the voice came, "*Look up; for only while you look, you rise.*" And looking steadfastly, he rose from the mire, and was saved.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 12.) We are far off from God by the leprosy of sin. Christ's love should draw us nigh to him for healing.
2. (Verse 13.) The cry of every soul should be, "Lord, have mercy upon us!"
3. Christ is the only one who can heal the leprosy of sin.
4. (Verse 14.) God often tries our faith, then he rewards it.
5. Men often want the joys and proofs of salvation before they are saved. The only way is to go and do every Christian duty; and, in so doing, the joys and proofs will come.
6. (Verse 15.) Ceremonies and forms must yield to the spirit of faith and love.
7. God should be glorified for every benefit we receive.
8. (Verse 17.) Where are the nine for whom Christ died as well as for the Christian?
9. The greatest good is often found where least expected.
10. "Whenever we see a man remarkably ungrateful, we may assuredly infer from thence that there is no true sense of religion in that person." — *South*.
11. "It is the character of an unworthy nature to write injuries in marble, and benefits in dust." — *Palmer*.
12. Salvation is a making the soul whole, — relieving it of the imperfections and diseases and losses of sin.
13. By faith, and never without faith, can the soul be made whole.

LESSON VI. — NOVEMBER 10, 1878.

WHOM THE LORD RECEIVES. — LUKE 18: 9-17.

TIME. Winter or early spring of A.D. 30.

PLACE. Perea, beyond Jordan. This parable was spoken during the same journey through Perea as those we have already been studying about in this quarter. See Connection, Lesson I, Fourth Quarter.

RULERS. Tiberius Caesar, at Rome; Pontius Pilate, over Judea; Herod Antipas, over Galilee.

INTRODUCTION.

The parable of this lesson is closely connected with the one which immediately precedes it. The parable of the persevering widow teaches the value of importunity in prayer. The parable of the Pharisee and publican teaches the spirit which should pervade our prayers. The first parable encourages us to pray, and faint not. The second parable reminds us how and in what manner we ought to pray. Both should be often pondered by every true Christian. — *Eyle*.

9 And he spake this parable unto | that they were righteous, and de-
certain which¹ trusted in themselves | spised others:

¹ ch. 10: 29.

EXPLANATORY.

9. **Unto certain which trusted in themselves.** This parable is spoken not to the Pharisees, nor concerning the Pharisees, — for then it would have been *no parable*, — but to the people, and with reference to some among them (then and always), who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise other men. The parable describes an every-day occurrence. — *Alford*. So low was their estimate of *sin*, and so high their estimate of their own merit, that they proposed to stand before God, to be justified on the ground of their own excellence; nay, came into his presence, and, under forms of prayer and thanks, paraded these laudations of themselves and deprecations of their fellows. — *Whedon*. **Despised others.** Their great sin was, that, despising the work of elevating *others*, they really rejoiced in their sinfulness and degradation, over which they could glory as a superior and despotic caste. Their language was, *This people that know not the law are accursed*. — *Whedon*. *The mark of a false culture is that it rejoices in being superior to others, and is willing*

10. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed

thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not¹ as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

¹ Isa. 65: 5. Rev. 3: 17.

that others should remain inferior. The mark of a *true culture* is that it seeks to lift up all to its level or higher.

10. **Two men.** The representatives of two different classes. Went up into the temple. The temple was on high ground. There was a court of the temple for prayer. See Matt. 21: 12. This was at the stated hour of prayer probably. See Acts 3: 1.—*Jacobus.* A Pharisee. The Pharisees were a powerful religious sect, of predominant influence in the Jewish state. They were the recognized teachers, proud of their legal knowledge, and boasting a superior sanctity. They observed the strictest letter of the Mosaic law, and besides held to various traditions (ch. 15: 2), washed themselves religiously before meals, fasted twice a week, on Thursdays and Mondays (see ch. 9: 14, and ch. 23: 15, 23), but were hypocritical (ch. 23: 14, 27, &c.), narrow-minded, selfish, bigoted, and vain, fond of pleasures and lax in morals (ch. 5: 20; ch. 15: 4, 8; ch. 23: 3, 14, 23, 25). And a religion such as theirs was declared by our Lord wholly worthless for admittance to heaven (Matt. 5: 20). Their name is from the Hebrew word *pharash*, which means, to *separate*.—*Jacobus.* The Pharisees were men who rested satisfied with the outward. The form of religion, which varies in all ages, that they wanted to stereotype. The inner heart of religion, the unchangeable, justice, mercy, truth,—that they could not feel. They could jangle about the breadth of a phylactery. They could discuss, as if it were a matter of life and death, ecclesiastical questions about tithes. They could decide to a furlong the length of journey allowable on the sabbath day. But they could not look with mercy upon a broken heart, nor suffer a hungry man to rub an ear of corn on the sabbath, nor cover the shame of a tempted sister or an erring brother. Men without souls, from whose narrow hearts the grandeur of everlasting truth was shut out.—*Robertson.* A publican. The publicans were tax-gatherers. Judaea was a province of the Roman Empire. The Jews bore this foreign yoke with great impatience, and paid their taxes with great reluctance. It happened, therefore, that those who were appointed to collect taxes were objects of great detestation. They were beside, men often of abandoned characters, oppressive in their exactions, and dissolute in their lives. By the Jews they were associated in character with thieves and adulterers, and those who were profane and dissolute.—*Barnes.* The publican represented those who, although they have sinned greatly, yet feel the burden of their sins, and desire to escape from them. The parable would make us feel how much nearer is such a one to the kingdom of God than the self-complacent Pharisee, or than any who share in the spirit and temper of the Pharisee,—that he, indeed, may be within it, while the other is without.—*Trench.*

11. **Stood.** It is a mistake growing out of forgetfulness of Jewish and early Christian customs, when some commentators see in the fact that the Pharisee prayed *standing*, an evidence already manifesting itself of his pride. Even the parable itself contradicts this notion; for the publican, whose prayer was a humble one, stood also. To pray standing was the manner of the Jews (1 Kings 8: 22. 2 Chron. 6: 12. Matt. 6: 5. Mark 11: 25), though in moments of more than ordinary humiliation or emotion of heart, they changed this attitude for one of kneeling or prostration (Dan. 6: 10. 2 Chron. 6: 13. Acts 9: 40).—*Trench.* And prayed. That is, he *boasted*. He praised, rather than prayed; and praised himself, rather than God. In fact, he really omitted to pray at all. As if he had no sin, he asked no forgiveness. His performance is divided into two parts. Under the form of thanks, he, 1, enumerates the bad things that the rest of men are, but he is not; 2, enumerates the good things he does. And there he closes.—*Whedon.* With himself; i.e., he said over to himself what he had done. Undoubtedly his prayer never ascended higher than himself. I thank thee. His prayer at first seems to promise well; "God, I thank thee," yet its early promise disappears: under the pretence of thankfulness to God, he does but thinly veil his exaltation of self; and he cannot thank God for what he has done for him, without insulting and casting scorn upon others.—*Trench.* Not as other men. As the rest of men.—*Alford.* Dividing the whole of mankind into two classes, putting himself in a class alone, and thrusting down all beside himself into the other class; his arrogance reaches even to such a pitch as this; he in one class, all the world besides in the other.—*Trench.* Extortioners. These violated the eighth commandment, taking from men more than their due. They who extort, that is, take more than what is right for their goods or their services, are indeed hateful to God.—*Jacobus.* They do not merely come a little short of his excellences, but they are

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote¹ upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for² every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

15 And³ they brought unto him

¹ Jer. 31: 19. ² Job 22: 29. Matt. 23: 12. ³ Matt. 19: 13. Mark 10: 13, &c.

"*extortioners, unjust, adulterers.*" Even as this publican. And then, his eye alighting on the publican, he drags him into his prayer, making him to supply the dark background on which the bright colors of his own virtues shall more gloriously appear, — finding, it may be, in the deep heart-earnestness with which the penitent was beating his breast, in his downcast eyes, proofs in confirmation of the judgment which he passes upon him. He has done nothing to call for this. So perfect is he in regard to the commands of the second table. — *Trench.*

12. I fast twice in the week. He is as perfect in regard to the first table of the law as in the second. The Mosaic economy enjoined but one fast, only one in the whole 52 weeks of the year; but this Pharisee fasted twice each week. The fasts that starved his body seem only to have fed his pride. — *Guthrie.* I give tithes (a tenth) of all I possess. More correctly rendered, *of all I acquire.* — *Alford.* God required his people to tithe the fruits of the olive and vine, the sheaves of the field, and the produce of their flocks: the sacrifice of the Pharisee rose above the requirements of the law. Anise and cummin and other common pot-herbs were all scrupulously tithed. "I have done more than He requires. He is my debtor, rather than I his." In this proud, arrogant man we see the spirit of self-righteousness fully developed. Although they may not come out so prominently, the elements of his character are in all who trust in themselves for salvation. — *Guthrie.*

13. The publican standing afar off. From the holy place. He stood in the court (probably the same court with the Pharisee) which was outside the holy place in the temple. — *Jacobus.* As Augustine observes, not afar off from God, for the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart. He stood "*afar off*:" not that he was a proselyte or a heathen, or had not full right to approach, for undoubtedly he also was a Jew; but in reverent awe, not presuming to press nearer to the holy place, for he knew something of the holiness of God and of his own sinfulness and defilement. — *Trench.* Would not lift up so much as his eyes. This contrasts with the ceremony and gesture of the Pharisees. (see Matt. 6: 5.) And the manner here indicates the nature of his prayer. — *Jacobus.* Smote upon his breast. An outward sign of inward grief or self-accusation (Luke 23: 48). Be merciful to me a sinner; literally, *the sinner*. The definite article rather implies, not comparison with others, but intense self-abasement, "sinner that I am." Nor are we to find any doctrinal meanings in the word be *merciful* (which literally means, *be propitiated*). We know of *only one way* in which the prayer could be accomplished; but the words here *have no reference to that, nor could they have.* — *Alford.* Prayer, it has commonly been taught, has four elements, — adoration, confession, thanksgiving, petition. I hold that we must always add a fifth part, namely, total self-surrender. If a man offers prayer in the full sense, he may be assured in the name of natural law, that he will obtain religious aid of a kind that he can receive from no other source. — *Joseph Cook.* True confession is distinguished by this, — that instead of mere generalities, it is definite. The *sin* is felt, and as a personal thing. — *Jacobus.*

14. I tell you. With what emphasis and power did this *tell you* come from this divine I! This man went down . . . justified; his sins forgiven, treated as a just person, and his prayer answered. Insulting to God and man, the prayer of the Pharisee, like a stone cast at heaven, falls back and returns to break his own head; while the publican's ascends like the cloud of incense that floated away fragrant and heavenward from the morning or evening sacrifice. Perfumed with a Saviour's merits, it is accepted as a sweet-smelling savor, and sins confessed are sins forgiven. Not that his confession and sorrow were the price of pardon; but that, feeling undone and lost, he cast himself on divine mercy, and so became a partaker of the righteousness which Jesus Christ has provided for the chief of sinners. — *Guthrie.* For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased. This great law of the kingdom of God is in the teaching of Christ inscribed, as in letters of gold, over its entrance-gate. And in how many different forms is it repeated! (Ps. 138: 6; 147: 6. Ch. 1: 53.) To be *self-empty*, or "poor in spirit," is the fundamental and indispensable preparation for the reception of the "grace which bringeth salvation." — *J. F. and B.* The truth of this great principle admits of illustration at every step of Bible history. Pharaoh, Goliath, Haman, Sennacherib, Achan, Achaz, and

also infants, that he would touch them: but when *his* disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them

not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child¹ shall in no wise enter therein.

¹ Ps. 131: 2. Mark 10: 15. 1 Pet. 1: 14.

zar, Herod, are all cases in point. These words form a beautiful transition to the bringing of the children to Jesus, the incident next recorded by our evangelist. — *Trench.*

15. The narrative of St. Luke here again falls in with Matthew and Mark after a divergence of nine chapters. (See Matt. 19: 13-15. Mark 10: 13-16.) They brought unto Him . . . infants. Showing that some at least of those called in Matthew and Mark simply "little" or "young children" were literally "*babes*." — *J. F. and B.* Not content with having received a blessing for themselves, they entreat this now for their little ones also. This scene is the more touching, since it was at the same time a scene of farewell. — *Van Oosterzee.* That he would touch them; or, as more fully in Matthew, "put his hands on them, and pray," or invoke a "blessing" on them (Mark 10: 16), according to venerable custom (Gen. 48: 14, 15). **Rebuked them.** Repeatedly the disciples thus interposed, to save annoyance and interruption to their Master; but, as the result showed, *always against the mind of Christ* (Matt. 15: 23. Ch. 18: 39, 40). — *J. F. and B.*

16. **Suffer little children to come.** There is something peculiarly touching and comforting in Christ's love for little children, and in the assurance that in heaven he is still "this same Jesus." When our little ones die, we know that they have gone to the care and protection of one who loves them. We thank him for saying, "of such is the kingdom of heaven." While still with us, our little ones are exposed to a thousand evils and dangers from which we cannot defend them. It is sweet to take them to Him who bids them to come. Here is a rebuke also to those who do not try to lead their children early to love and trust in Jesus. They can become Christians when very young. **Of such is the kingdom of God.** Considering the verse which follows these words, and the parable which precedes it, it seems probable that the principal idea in our Lord's mind was to set before us the beauty of a humble and childlike spirit, and to commend such a spirit to his disciples for imitation. — *Ryle.*

17. **Verily I say unto you, &c.** The lesson of this verse admits of only one interpretation. It describes the spirit and frame of mind which are absolutely necessary to salvation. Pride, high thoughts, and self-righteousness, must be laid aside. We must be converted, and become as little children. (Matt. 18: 3). — *Ryle.* **The kingdom of God.** God's ruling in the heart and life as king. **As a little child.** Not childishness, but childlikeness; trusting and loving God as a child does its parents. The kingdom of God is an invisible and spiritual kingdom, and to enter into it this disposition of heart is necessary; namely, the childlike spirit, — a spirit free from crime and self-will, receiving the divine blessings as they come, in humble dependence and submission. — *McClintock.*

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. "**That's me; that's my prayer.**" A poor Hottentot in Southern Africa lived with a good Dutchman, who kept up family prayer daily. One day he read, "Two men went up into the temple to pray." The poor savage, whose heart was already awakened, looked earnestly at the reader, and whispered, "Now I'll learn how to pray." The Dutchman read on, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men." — "No, I am not; but I am worse," whispered the Hottentot. Again the Dutchman read, "I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." — "I don't do that. I don't pray in that manner. What shall I do?" said the distressed savage. The good man read on until he came to the publican, who "would not lift so much as his eyes to heaven." "That's me!" cried his hearer. "Stood afar off," read the other. "That's where I am," said the Hottentot. "But smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." — "That's me; that's my prayer!" cried the poor creature; and, smiting on his dark breast, he prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner," until, like the poor publican, he went down to his house a saved and happy man. — *Biblical Museum.*

II. Augustine, when asked what was the first step to heaven, replied, "Humility." — "And what is the second?" — "Humility." — "And the third?" The same answer, "Humility."

III. The "Times" of June 23, 1858, in recording petitions presented to the House of Lords, remarked of one that it was rejected on the ground of an omission, — after all, but a simple one, — the word "humble" was left out. Say, how many petitions to a higher tribunal are rejected for lack,

not perhaps of humility in the words employed, but in the heart of the individual employing them?—*W.*

IV. A Boston scholar has lately told the public that a somewhat rough nan of affairs in this city, in the presence of the American evangelist, thought he would be manly enough to try the experiment of offering prayer. "But," said the evangelist, "you must be sincere."—"I know very little of this thing," the man replied, "but I am willing to be sincere in one prayer at least."—"Very well," said the evangelist: "let us kneel down here and now together, and do you say from the depths of your heart, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" The merchant did that; and I suppose from what followed that he did it in a genuine way. Certain it is that there struck across that man's countenance a beam of light from the sun behind the sun; a peace and an illumination unknown to him before. He rose up, saying, "This is a singular experience. My partner, do you do as I have done, and perhaps there will be similar results." The partner was a sceptic, but he knelt, and offered the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and he, too, rose up, smitten across the forehead with the light that falls out of those ancestral spaces from which all souls come, and into which all men haste.—*Joseph Cook.*

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 9.) False culture rejoices that others are not so good as we. True culture lifts up the poor and ignorant.

2. (Verse 10.) The self-righteous let a few self-made (and therefore poorly made) virtues cover up a multitude of sins.

3. We may have the outward forms of some virtues, and yet be utterly destitute of that spirit which is the soul of all virtue.

4. Therefore the self-righteous are the hardest to convict of sin.

5. There is a heaven-wide difference between righteousness and self-righteousness.

6. (Verse 12.) Things good in themselves become evil when filled with pride.

7. (Verse 13.) True prayer, like true piety, is always humble.

8. (Verse 14.) Self-exaltation is a proof that we are really debased.

9. Humility is Jacob's ladder resting on the earth, but with steps up to heaven and God.

10. (Verse 15.) It is noble work to lead the least and youngest to Jesus.

11. Children can become Christians very young.

12. The comfort of knowing Christ's love for little children. —

LESSON VII.—NOVEMBER 17, 1878.

ZACCHEUS THE PUBLICAN.—LUKE 19: 1-10.

TIME. Spring, A. D. 30. On the way to Jerusalem a short time before the passover, which was the fourth and last attended by Jesus.

PLACE. Jericho, the city of palms.

RULERS. Tiberius Caesar, over Rome; Pontius Pilate, over Judaea; Herod Antipas, over Galilee.

THE CONNECTION.

The passover was near at hand; and Jesus gradually moved nearer toward Jerusalem from Perea, where occurred most of the incidents of the succeeding lessons. Large bodies of people were going up to Jerusalem from all directions, and Jesus fell in with this crowd near the place where they usually crossed the Jordan (see Lesson V., under verse 11). He had already plainly told the disciples of his coming betrayal and death (ch. 18: 31-34). As Jesus with the pilgrim crowd approached Jericho, he healed the blind man Bartimeus, who sat begging by the wayside. Here it was that Zaccheus lived, of whom we study in the present lesson.

1 And *Jesus* entered and passed through Jericho.¹

2 And, behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the

¹ Josh. 6: 26. 1 Kings 16: 34.

EXPLANATORY.

1. **Jericho.** City of the moon, or place of fragrance. The largest city in the valley of the Jordan, about 20 miles north-east of Jerusalem, on the west side of the river Jordan, north of its

chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw¹ him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make

¹ Ps. 139: 1-3.

entrance into the Dead Sea. In the time of Christ, Jericho was wealthy and flourishing. Near the city on the west, is Mount Quarantania, with which tradition connects the fasting and the temptation of Christ.—*Whitney*. Bible allusions to Jericho are very numerous (Num. 22: 1; 26: 3. Josh. 2: 15; 3: 16; 4: 12; 6: 1; 24: 11. 1 Kings 16: 34. 2 Kings 2: 19-22, &c.). This city is marked now by only a few huts and a ruined castle. The ride from Jerusalem is by a desolate road which is yet infested by thieves. This city of palms had, until lately, one tall palm-tree left to mark its ancient glory; but that is at length gone. On account of the ancient trade in fruits, balsam, &c., a "chief publican" was appointed to the city.—*Jacobus*.

2. *Zaccheus*. Zaccheus signifies in the Hebrew "pure." The name occurs in Ezra 2: 9. N-h. 7: 14. He was not a Gentile, but a Jew (see verse 9).—*Alford*. Chief among the publicans. Their supervisor, to whom they rendered their accounts. See Lesson VI., under verse 10, for publicans.—*Kitto*. Probably an administrator of the revenue derived from *balsam*, which was produced in abundance in the neighborhood.—*Alford*. Rich. Ill-gotten riches some of it was (verse 8). Jesus cared alike for rich and poor, ever looking at the *man*, and not his possessions.

3. *He sought to see Jesus*. Possibly moved partly by curiosity; but more likely, having heard of Jesus and his work, and of his kindness to even the despised order to which he belonged, he felt a longing in his soul for something better than he possessed, was not satisfied with himself, and had an undefined feeling that somehow there was help for him from this wonderful man whose doings were in the mouths of every one. *Who he was*. What kind of a person. Is he one of the old prophets, or is he the Messiah? He knew that his name was Jesus, that is, Saviour, and in some degree trusted that he could save his people from their sins.—*Whedon*. *For the press*. The great crowds following Jesus: many were on their way to the feast of the passover.

4. *He ran before*. He was not to be discouraged by such hinderances. "Where there's a will, there's a way;" and no one who is willing shall fall of a way. Thus the real *seeking* proves itself. It gets out of the crowd, and out of all hinderances, and puts itself in the way of seeing Christ. How many, rather than *run* or *climb*, would turn back!—*Jacobus*. Climbed into a sycamore tree. But how could he see him? Jesus would not be likely to pass his house; nor did he travel in any state, in palanquin, or upon horse or camel, so as to be seen from far, but walked on foot along the dusty roads, undistinguished probably, in stature or appearance, from the crowds around him. Besides, Zaccheus himself was a little man, who could not even thrust his way through a crowd, or overlook the heads of others. His anxiety to see the good prophet of Nazareth was, however, so strong, that he mounted one of the trees,—a sycamore-tree that grew beside the road which Jesus must pass,—taking the example, probably, from the boys, who had doubtless "manned" for the occasion all the trees overlooking the road; for boys are boys everywhere and in all ages, the most ancient things existing, being the same now as they were 2,000 or 5,000 years ago. Zaccheus himself was but a boy in stature, and therefore the better suited for the post he had chosen; and even the Jericho boys would hardly venture to dispute a seat with the terrible little publican whom their fathers regarded with dread.—*Kitto*. There are times when, not being on a level with other men in qualifications of temper, mind, character, we must compensate by inventions and Christian expedients. You must climb over the crowd of difficulties which stand between your soul and Christ; you must "run before," and forecast trials, and get into the sycamore solitude.—*Robertson*. *Sycamore tree*. The Egyptian fig, with leaves like the mulberry. It grows very large and high. It was formerly abundant in Palestine, where it flourished in the plains and low valleys, as it now does in the upper regions of the Jordan. Its fruit, or rather the fleshy envelope of flowers and fruit, grows in little sp'gs or clusters, is largely consumed by the poor in Palestine and Lower Egypt, and, when quite ripe, has a soft, watery, sweetish, and slightly aromatic taste. A lofty and shady tree, the sycamore was planted along the wayside for the benefit of the pedestrian. Its stem is short, and frequently 50 feet in circumference, and its boughs extend horizontally to a great distance.—*Bible Plants*. To see him. This was his only object. This tree was along the road. And every man knows of places where he can put himself in the way of Christ,—as the house of God, the praying

haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide¹ at thy house.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That² he was

gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

8 And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor;³ and if I have taken any thing from

¹ John 14: 23. Rev. 8: 20. ² ch. 5: 30. Matt. 9: 11. ³ Ps. 41: 1.

circle, the closet for secret prayer. Here Christ passes. How can any really seek to see Christ, who avoid or omit such natural and proper means?—*Jacobus*.

5. When Jesus came to the place. The probability is, that our Lord's supernatural knowledge of man (see John 1: 48-50) is intended to be understood as the means of his knowing Zaccheus. — *Alford*. Saw him. Zaccheus had his heart's desire. He saw Jesus; and, what was of more consequence to his welfare, Jesus saw him. Perhaps it was at the moment that a feeling of adhesion to Christ was rising up and filling his heart, that Jesus looked up, and, *accosting him by his name*, said, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." — *Kittó*. No one sets out to seek Christ, but he finds Christ out already seeking him. Like the prodigal's father, he sees him a great way off, and runs to meet him with welcomes and embraces. — *Jacobus*. Abide at thy house. Remain there, or put up with him. This was an honor which Zaccheus did not expect. The utmost, it seems, which he aimed at, was to see Jesus; but instead of that, Jesus proposed to remain with him, and give him the benefit of his personal instruction. It is but one among a thousand instances where the Saviour goes, in bestowing mercies, far beyond the desire, or the expectation of men. — *Barnes*. What took place in the house of Zaccheus is not fully reported by the evangelist; but the result is given, and is such as to show that the publican profited well by the divine teachings he was now enabled to receive from the mouth of Jesus, who had clearly a more promising pupil than in the rich young man who had lately turned back from him. — *Kittó*.

6. Made haste. The internal revolution was as perfect as instantaneous. "He spake, and it was done." — *J. F. and B.* Joyfully. When one really wishes to leave sin, and come to Christ, then nothing is so joyful as repenting, and receiving Christ, and living in love.

7. They all murmured. Here is the last mutter of the cavillers at our Lord's dealings of mercy to the outcast publicans. It was, however, no murmur of Pharisees alone; but of all the crowd, who, supposing that he is on his way to take possession of the Messianic kingdom at Jerusalem, deem it unbecoming for him to give countenance to an agent of Roman despotism. — *Whedon*. To be guest, or lodge; something more than "eating with" such (ch. 15: 2). A sinner, that was one but a minute ago, but now is not. This mighty change, however, was all unknown to them; but they shall know it presently. "Sinner" would refer both to his office, vile in the eyes of a Jew, and to his character, which, it is evident, was not good. — *J. F. and B.*

8. Behold, Lord, the half of my goods, &c. The approving smile, the gracious word, of Jesus, was more to Zaccheus than all the murmurs and insults of the crowd. Jesus did not despise him; nay, Jesus had done him honor: therefore he would honor, he would respect, himself. As all that was base in him would have been driven into defiance by contempt and hatred, so all that was noble was evoked by a considerate tenderness. He would strive to be worthy, at least more worthy, of his glorious guest. And therefore, standing prominently forth among the throng, he uttered—not to them, for they despised him, and for them he cared not, but to his Lord—the vow which, by one high act of magnanimity, at once attested his penitence, and sealed his forgiveness. "Behold, the half of my goods, Lord, I hereby give to the poor; and whatever fraudulent gain I ever made from any one, I now restore fourfold." This great sacrifice of that which had hitherto been dearest to him, this fullest possible restitution of every gain he had ever gotten dishonestly, this public confession and public restitution, should be a pledge to his Lord, that his grace had not been in vain. Thus did love unseal by a single touch those swelling fountains of penitence which contempt would have kept closed forever. — *Farrar*. The half. The law required a fifth part of one's goods to be given in charity. It is not unlikely that Zaccheus may have heard of the parable lately spoken on this subject (ch. 16: 9), and so may have sought to make himself friends by the perishing mammon. The idea is not that this was his *habit*, but his purpose and resolve. This, therefore, is no boasting declaration of his own righteousness, but a confession of discipleship, and a mark of repentance. It is not giving to the poor which entitles to Christ's favor, for without love to Christ it is nothing (1 Cor. 13); and yet such a large benevolence may prove one's devotion to Christ, if it be out of love. — *Jacobus*. Zaccheus is not, as some strangely construe him, telling what he has heretofore been

any man by¹ false accusation, I restore² him fourfold.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house,

forso much as he also is a son³ of Abraham.

10 For⁴ the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.⁵

¹ ch. 3: 14. Exod. 20: 16. ² Exod. 22: 1. 2 Sam. 12: 6. ³ ch. 13: 16. ⁴ Matt. 18: 11. ⁵ Ezek. 34: 6. Rom. 5: 6.

accustomed to do; but what it is now a part of his new life to do: "I hereby give."—*Whedon*. If I have; i.e., "so far as I have," for evidently the "if" is so used (as Phil. 4: 8). Taken by false accusation. "Defrauded," "overcharged" (ch. 3: 12, 13). Fourfold. The Roman law required this: the Jewish law, but the principal and a fifth more (Num. 5: 7). There was no demand made for either; but as if to revenge himself on his hitherto reigning sin (see John 20: 28), and to testify the change he had experienced, besides surrendering the half of his *fair* gains to the poor, he voluntarily determines to give up all that was ill-gotten, quadrupled. He gratefully addressed this to the "Lord," to whom he owed the wonderful change.—*J. F. and B.* You say if people are converted suddenly, they won't hold out. Zaccheus held out long enough to restore fourfold. We should like to have a work that reaches men's pockets. I can imagine one of his servants going to a neighbor next morning, with a check for £100, and handing it over. "What is this for?"—"Oh! my master defrauded you of £25 a few years ago, and this is restitution money." That would give confidence in Zaccheus's conversion.—*D. L. Moody*.

9. Jesus said unto him,—but before all. This day, &c. Memorable saying! Salvation already come, but not a day old. To this house. So expressed, probably, to meet the taunt, "he is gone to be guest," &c. The house is no longer polluted: it is now fit to receive Me. *Salvation to a house* is an exceedingly precious idea, expressing the new air that would henceforth breathe in it, and the new impulses from its head which would reach its members (Ps. 118: 15. Acts 16: 15, 16, 31).—*J. F. and B.* Salvation has come to the house of the publican, not because that house had received one of Christ's visits, but because he, the master of the house, had begun to live a new life, having received Christ into his heart, and purposing henceforth to live a godly life. He was saved from sin to life eternal. A son of Abraham. Though despised by the multitude, he has his rights as a Jew, and has availed himself of them by receiving his Lord in faith and humility.—*Alford*.

10. The Son of man. The name *Son of man* is given to Jesus only three times in the New Testament (see Acts 7: 56. Rev. 1: 13; 14: 4), except by himself. When he speaks of himself, this is the most common appellation by which he is known. The phrase *Son of God*, given to Christ, denotes a *peculiar* connection with God (John 10: 36). The name *Son of man* probably denotes a corresponding *peculiar* connection with man. Perhaps he used it to signify the interest he felt in man, his peculiar love and friendship for him, and his willingness to devote himself to the best interests of the race.—*Barnes*. Come to seek and to save, &c. To seek like the shepherd (ch. 15: 4. Compare Matt. 9: 13; 18: 11), to save, in the sense of to rescue.—*Van Oosterzee*. The very office of redeeming love is to save the lost, those that cannot save themselves. Observe the implication, (1) that the world is lost, undone, beyond all human help; (2) that the object of Christ's coming was not (chiefly) to teach or to legislate, but to save.—*Abbott*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Dr. Kane, finding a flower under the Humboldt glacier, was more affected by it because it grew beneath the lip and cold bosom of the ice, than he would have been by the most gorgeous garden bloom. So some single struggling grace in the heart of one far removed from divine influences may be dearer to God than a whole catalogue of virtues in the life of one more favored of heaven.—*Christ in Literature*.

II. (Verse 8.) If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. One of the Moorish kings of Spain wished to build a pavilion on a field near his garden, and offered to purchase it of the woman to whom it belonged; but she would not consent to part with the inheritance of her fathers. The field, however, was seized, and the building was erected. The poor woman complained to a *cadi*, who promised to do all in his power to serve her. One day, while the king was in the field, the *cadi* came with an empty sack, and asked permission to fill it with the earth on which he was treading. He obtained leave; and, when the sack was filled, he requested the king to complete his kindness by assisting him to load his ass with it. The monarch laughed, and tried to lift it, but soon let it fall, complaining of its enormous weight. "It is, however," said the *cadi*, "only a small part of the ground which thou hast wrested from one of thy subjects: how, then, wilt thou bear the weight of the whole field when thou shalt appear before the

great Judge laden with this iniquity?" The king thanked him for his reproof, and not only restored the field to its owner, but gave her the building which he had erected, and all the wealth which it contained.

III. (Verse 10.) To seek and to save . . . lost. Mr. Moody once was invited to preach in prison. After preaching, he went to visit the prisoners, and began to talk with them; and was greatly astonished, as he went from one to another, to find out, according to their own account, that none of them had done any thing to bring them to this place. One said false witnesses swore a lie; another, that the man who did the deed looked so much like him that he was punished instead of the right man. Mr. Moody says, "I went round to nearly every cell; but the answer was always the same, — they had never done any thing. Why, I never saw so many innocent men together in my life! There was nobody to blame but the magistrates, according to their way of it. These men were wrapping their filthy rags of self-righteousness about them. I had got almost through the prison, when I came to a cell, and found a man with his elbows on his knees, and his head in his hands. Two little streams of tears were running down his cheeks: they did not come by drops that time. 'What's the trouble?' I said. He looked up, the picture of remorse and despair. 'Oh, my sins are more than I can bear!' It was like a cup of refreshment to find a man who believed he was lost; so I stood there, and held up a crucified Saviour to him. Next morning, I felt so much interested in him, that I thought I must see him before I went back to Chicago. No sooner had my eye lighted on his face, than I saw that remorse and despair had fled away, and his countenance was beaming with celestial light: the tears of joy had come into his eyes, and the tears of despair were gone. The Sun of righteousness had broken out across his path; his soul was leaping within him for joy; he had received Christ as Zaccheus did, joyfully. Can you tell me why the Son of God came down to that prison that night, and, passing cell after cell, went to that one, and set the captive free? It was because the man believed he was lost."

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 2.) Where there is a will there is always a way. No one ever sought Christ sincerely who did not find him.

2. (Verse 4.) The Christian should use every fair expedient for making up his natural deficiencies.

3. Many with fewest advantages accomplish the most.

4. We should put ourselves in the way of Christ, by means of the Bible, the Church, meetings, Christian conversation.

5. (Verse 5.) If we seek Christ, we will find that he has been seeking us.

6. No greater blessing exists than Christ abiding in our homes.

7. (Verse 6.) It is joyful to be a true disciple, no matter what it may cost.

8. (Verse 7.) Sinners often do all they can to prevent others from being Christians; and nothing is sadder.

9. Out of great sinners Jesus can make great saints.

10. (Verse 8.) The proofs of conversion: repentance, restoration, benevolence, and joy in it all.

11. (Verse 10.) All sinners are lost: they do not know the way back to God and heaven.

12. Christ's coming to save the lost gives us all hope.

13. We should, with him, seek after the lost and wandering ones.

LESSON VIII.—NOVEMBER 24, 1878.

JUDAISM OVERTHROWN.—LUKE 21: 8-21.

TIME. Tuesday afternoon, April 3, A.D. 30. (So Smith and Farrar. Robinson puts it Wednesday, April 4.)

EVENTS OF THE LAST WEEK OF CHRIST'S LIFE. (Smith.)

(The Jewish days are to be reckoned from the preceding sunset.)

Sat. Nisan 9. March 31. SABBATH at Bethany. Evening; Simon's supper.
Sun. " 10. April 1. Palm Sunday. Entry into Jerusalem.
Mon. " 11. " 2. Jesus again in the temple.

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| Tues. Nisan 12. | April 3. | Last visit to the temple. Prophecy of his second coming. |
| Wed. " 13. | " 4. | Conspiracy of the rulers. |
| Thurs. " 14. | " 5. | Evening. The PASSOVER, and Lord's Supper. |
| Fri. " 15. | " 6. | Good Friday. The CRUCIFIXION and entombment. |
| Sat. " 16. | " 7. | SABBATH. Easter Eve. |
| Sun. " 17. | " 8. | EASTER DAY. The RESURRECTION. |
| Thurs. Sivan 3. | May 17. | Holy Thursday. The ASCENSION. |
| Sun. Sivan 13. | May 27. | PENTECOST. WHITSUNDAY. |

PLACE. Mount of Olives, whither Jesus had gone from Jerusalem with his disciples, having taken his final farewell of the temple.

RULES. Tiberius Caesar, emperor of Roman Empire; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. Read in connection Matt. 10 and 24, Mark 13.

THE CONNECTION.

After the conversion of Zaccheus at Jericho, Jesus went to Bethany, where he arrived six days before the passover. The sabbath (our Saturday) was spent there. The next day he made his public entry into Jerusalem. The first three days of the week seem to have been spent by him teaching in the temple during the day, and then going out to Bethany for the night (Luke 21: 37). It was Tuesday, 12th of Nisan (April 3), that he taught for the last time in the temple. It was then that he had the contests with his enemies spoken of in Luke 20, and also commended the widow (Luke 21: 1-7). But the greatest words of this eventful day were uttered by our Lord to his disciples after he had left Jerusalem. As unconscious of what was passing in his mind as they seem to have been inattentive to his prophecy of its ruin, they had called his attention, as he departed from the temple, to the magnificence of its buildings; and he had replied that the time was coming when not one stone would be left upon another. The eastern valley was no sooner crossed than they began to ask him when these things would happen, and what would be the signs of his coming and of the end of the world. The threefold form of this inquiry is an important guide to the momentous discourse which Jesus uttered as he sat upon the slope of Olivet, in full view of the temple. Here he is seen as the great Prophet of the new dispensation, briefly recounting the warnings long before uttered by Daniel, and yet to be more fully revealed through St. John. The first part of the discourse describes the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, the destruction of the temple, and perhaps the fearful calamities which attended the final dispersion of the Jews by Hadrian. Equally clear is the reference of the last part, though the point of transition is very difficult to fix, to the scenes preceding and attending the end of the world, and the final judgment; and to these a practical application is given by the parables of the faithful and unfaithful servant, and of the wise and foolish virgins, while the whole concludes with a plain description of the judgment-day. — *Smith*. For further elucidation of this double question and double answer, see "Illustrative," II.

5- 8 And he said, Take¹ heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall
 7- come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and² the time draweth near:
 9 But then ye shall hear of wars

¹ 2 Thess. 2: 3, 9, 10. 1 John 4: 1. 2 John 7. ² Rev. 1: 3.

EXPLANATORY.

8. Take heed . . . be not deceived. The disciples were momentarily expecting the public manifestation of Jesus as the Messiah; for, although he had told them of his crucifixion, they did not understand him. They, supposing that the destruction of Jerusalem, the overthrow of Judaism, the manifestation of Jesus as the Messiah-King, and the end of the world, would be contemporaneous, asked when they would occur, and what would be the sign of their approach. One principal object of Christ's discourse is to correct their misapprehension. Calvin interprets well their probable state of mind: "Having been convinced, that, as soon as the reign of Christ should commence, they would be in every respect happy, they leave warfare out of the account, and fly all at once to a triumph." — *Abbott*. The Jews, from such prophecies as Isa. 54: 13, Jer. 31: 34, Mal. 4: 2, expected that after the Messiah came, they would enjoy immunity from false doctrine. Jesus here warns his disciples to be still on their guard against it. Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ. Better, I am He. Pretending to be the Messiah, and trying to deceive the people, and make them think that the temporal kingdom which they were expecting was about to be established. Do not imagine that the kingdom will immediately appear. Be not deceived by the claims of false Messiahs. There must first be a period of tribulation, the travail out of which the kingdom (that kingdom

and commotions, be¹ not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end *is* not by and by.

10 Then said he unto them,² Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

12 But before all these, they

¹ Prov. 3: 25, 26. ² Hag. 2: 22.

which he, the true Messiah, came to establish) shall be born; a period of persecution from without, and schism, apostasy, and false doctrine within, to be accompanied by the preaching of the gospel throughout the habitable globe. Do not, then, allow false reports of the coming of the Messiah to mislead you. — *Abbott*. In my name; assuming my dignity. *Saying, I am Christ*. Pretending to be the Messiah. Many, accordingly, did pretend to be the Messiah between the death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem. — *Ripley*. The time draweth near. The time of the kingdom. — *Alford*. Not the words of our Lord, but of the many who should come in his name.

9. When ye shall hear of wars. In Matt. 24: 6, it reads, "*wars and rumors of wars*." Such there certainly were during this period; but the prophecy must be interpreted rather of those of which the Hebrew Christians would be most likely to hear as a cause of terror. Such undoubtedly were the three threats of war against the Jews by Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, of the first of which Josephus says that "it would have brought extermination to the Jewish nation, had it not been for Caligula's death." — *Alford*. (It is doubted by Schaff whether prophecy is ever so specific as Alford would make it; and Lange thinks the reference is to all wars down to the end of the world.) Commotions. There were serious disturbances, (1) at Alexandria, which gave rise to the complaint against and deposition of Flaccus, and Philo's work against him (A.D. 38), in which the Jews as a nation were the especial objects of persecution; (2) at Seleucia about the same time, in which more than 50,000 Jews were killed; (3) at Jamnia, a city on the coast of Judæa near Joppa. Many other such national tumults are recorded by Josephus. — *Alford*. Be not terrified. Do not be troubled, and think that the end of the world is at hand. The end is not by and by. The Greek word here translated *by and by* signifies *immediately, or presently*; and this was precisely the meaning at the time of our translation. — *Swinton*.

10. Nation shall rise against nation. Alford makes this refer to the same events as "wars and commotions," in verse 9. Lange says, "Here the subject is great political revolutions in the world of nations; migrations of nations, risings, judgments, blendings, and new formations of peoples." Bear in mind the massacres at Cesarea between Syrians and Jews, in which 20,000 of the latter fell, while in Syria almost every city was divided into two armies, which stood opposed to one another as deadly enemies; the quick succession of the five emperors in Rome within a few years, — Nero, Galva, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, — and the tumults connected therewith in wider and narrower circles. — *Van Oosterzee*.

11. Great earthquakes. The principal earthquakes occurring between this prophecy and the destruction of Jerusalem were: (1) a great earthquake in Crete, A.D. 46 or 47; (2) one at Rome on the day when Nero assumed the manly toga mentioned by Tacitus, A.D. 53; (3) one at Laodicea in Phrygia, A.D. 60; (4) one in Campania. In divers places, — *place for place*, i.e., here and there, each in its particular locality; as we say, "up and down," — does not seem to imply that the earthquakes should be in Judæa or Jerusalem. Famines and pestilences. A great famine, prophesied in Acts 11: 28, occurred A.D. 49, and another in the reign of Claudius, and mentioned by Josephus (Antiq. 3: 15, 3). A pestilence, A.D. 65, in a single autumn carried off 30,000 persons at Rome. — *Alford*. Fearful sights. Terrific portents, frightful phenomena, are here reckoned as a hint beforehand of what is more fully stated in verse 25. — *Jacobus*. Josephus has given us a very particular account of the prodigies of this kind which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem. He speaks of a flaming sword seen over the city, and of a comet which appeared there for a twelve-month. He mentions a light which for the space of half an hour shone so bright in the night between the temple and the altar, that it seemed as if it were noonday. He takes notice also of what eye-witnesses had related to him, that chariots and armed troops were seen fighting in the sky upon a certain day. He adds, that on the day of Pentecost, when the priests entered into the inner temple, they heard a great noise and voice as of a multitude crying out, "Let us depart hence." The substance of this account is also given by Tacitus the Roman historian.

It is evident that the prophecies of these verses are not peculiarly applicable to the period immediately preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. The prophecies of wars and commotions apply with still greater force to the campaigns of Charlemagne, the wars between the Popes and

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind
is stayed on Thee. Because he trusteth in Thee

LUKE 21: 8-21.

LESSON VIII

FOURTH QUARTER

An trial for the honor of their Master

shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons,¹ being brought before kings² and rulers for my name's sake.

13 And³ it shall turn to you for a testimony.

14 Settle it therefore in your

hearts, not to⁴ meditate before what ye shall answer:

15 For I will give you wisdom, and wisdom, w⁵ sares shall not nor resist.

16 And⁶ ye shall be able to answer both by paren-

¹ Acts 4: 3; 5: 18; 12: 4; 16: 24. Rev. 2: 10. ² Acts 25: 23. ³ Phil. 1: 27. Matt. 10: 19. ⁴ Acts 6: 10. ⁵ Mic. 7: 5, 6.

the German emperors, the conflicts between Napoleon I. and the allies between France, Italy, Austria, and Germany; the wars of the Roses between Cromwell; and, in our own country, the American Revolution and the plagues, and earthquakes, there have been more remarkable instances since the fall of Jerusalem, and instances in which the Christian Church has suffered. Understand Christ's language here to be an admonition to expect a long time before the end will appear, — a prophecy which history has both interpreted and confirmed.

12. But before all these. Better, *these things*. During this time have happened. — *Alford*. Matthew in the parallel passage (ch. 24: 9) has the term, at or about that time, which Luke here determines. — *Jacobus*. See you. With hostile intent. Delivering you up to the synagogues. See Matt. 10: 17. The councils, or sanhedrim, were the spiritual judicial synagogues (the Jewish places of worship) of the country, where the sentence pronounced upon heretics was executed. — *Lange*. Before kings. Herod Caesar; i.e., Nero (Acts 25: 12). Rulers. Such as Felix, Festus, Gallio, Paul.

13. It shall turn to you for a testimony. In Mark 13: 9, it is thus; "I.e., the persecutions mentioned shall serve as opportunity to the concerning their Lord, which here, as in Acts 18: 11, is represented as some — *Van Oosterzee*. It was also a testimony to the truth of Christ's words in the end and thus would confirm their faith in his promises, which would sustain them.

14. Settle it in your hearts; i.e., make up your minds. Not to ye shall say. In Mark it is, "Take no thought;" i.e., do not be anxious as the contest is among friends, he commands us to take thought (1 Pet. 3: terrible tribunal, and frantic assemblies, and terrors on all sides, he himself, that they may take courage and speak out, and not be discouraged cause. — *Chrysostom*. This verse is best interpreted by such practical illustrations by Acts 4: 19, 20; 5: 20-32; and especially Dan. 3: 16-18. — *Abbott*.

15. I will give you a mouth and wisdom. Ability to speak as the law demand. Gainsay; i.e., say against. They will not be able to reply to what you say, or to oppose its force. Thus every thing needful is promised them, as well for the material as for the formal part of their defence, so that continued opposition should become extremely hard for their antagonists. It is not an absolute, but a relative impossibility, that is spoken of; and therefore not only Acts 6: 10, but also 7: 51; 13: 8-10, and other passages, must be compared. — *Van Oosterzee*. Even irrespective of this promise, it is generally safer in time of threatened danger to trust to the intuition of the hour, and speak boldly and simply the truth, than to study an answer which by much thinking is apt to become an evasion. Mental distraction never inspires moral courage. — *Lynn Abbott*. This was never meant to teach that careful study and thought were not necessary for giving instruction in the Bible and the Christian life, although it has sometimes been thus used.

16. Ye shall be betrayed . . . by parents and brethren. Were there no evidence that this had been done, it could scarcely be credible. Yet, dreadful as this prediction was, it was fulfilled; and, incredible as it seems, parents and children, and husbands and wives, were found wicked enough to deliver up each other to those cruel modes of death on account of their attachment to the gospel. Such is the opposition of the heart of man to the gospel. — *Barnes*. In missionary lands this is literally fulfilled to-day, as we all know. Among the four auditors of our Lord were found James, who was to be the first martyr among the apostles, and Peter, upon whom the subsequent prophecy was fulfilled (John 21: 18, 19). But these were to be only the first fruits of an incalculable

3-8 - A time of Grace a time of blindness and a time of Judgment - as in the personal history of individuals & 3 1/2 years of visitation thus it is doom was sealed

FOURTH QUARTER.

LESSON VIII.

LUKE 21: 8-21

kinsfolks, and friends; and ¹ some shall they cause to be put to

and ye shall be hated ² of all my name's sake.

there shall not a hair of perish.

your patience ⁴ possess ye

20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

12: 2; 26: 10. Rev. 2: 13; 6: 9; 12: 11. ² John 17: 14. ³ Matt. 10: 30. ⁴ Rom. 5: 3. Heb. 10: 36. Jas. 1: 4.

martyrs, who in the course of the centuries should fall for the cause of the Saviour. —

shall be hated of all men. Compare with this warning the blessing which accompanied 5: 11, 12). Both warning and promise are applicable to all Christ's disciples to the Compare John 15: 18-21; 16: 1-4. That the disciples were hated is abundantly illustrated. Tacitus calls the Christians "a race of men hated for their crimes." Christian commends itself to the consciences of men, but is hated because it crosses their self-rebukes, by its very purity, their sin. Chrysostom remarks on the combination of which Christ warned his disciples, — the courts of justice, kings, governors, synagogues of of Gentiles, rulers, ruled, their own kinsfolk, and finally the whole combined enmity. The spiritual power of Christ is exemplified in the fact that he could describe such and yet inspire the twelve with courage to go forth undaunted to meet them. — Abbott. tion of the treatment of the Christians, see Gibbon's Rome, vol. ii. ch. 16. For my ke. On account of attachment to me; or because you bear my name as Christians. —

shall not a hair of your head perish. Although their lives should be taken (verse 16), up of their blood should be shed in vain; not a hair should fall of its effect, or go for Whedon. It is said that in the final destruction of Jerusalem not a Christian lost his life, obeyed this warning (verses 20, 21).

your patience; i.e., by your endurance of all these things. Possess ye (render, ye e, not possess); souls, this endurance being God's appointed way in and by which your to be put in your possession. See Matt. 16: 25. Luke 9: 24. — Alford. Only by patience sesses their souls. (1) Men possess their souls, when they have all the powers and facul- sions of the soul under the perfect control of their reason and conscience. (2) We put our ense, into what we do; and we possess our souls when we put them in such things as will ver a possession of joy. — In Matthew and Mark "he that endureth to the end, &c." Here s the same, — promising salvation to those who continue faithful, and who amidst all trials aith persevere and endure. "By your patient endurance gain, or win, your souls." — Jacobus.

Jerusalem compassed with armies. After the death of Christ, the Jews broke into open revolt against the Romans. The Roman army was sent to subdue them; first under Cestius Gallus, A.D. 66, they encamped around Jerusalem; then under Vespasian, A.D. 68; lastly under Titus, A.D. 70. The desolation thereof. The Romans, under Vespasian, invaded the country, and took the cities of Galilee, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, &c., where Christ had been especially rejected, and murdered numbers of the inhabitants. At Jerusalem the scene was most wretched of all. At the passover, when there might have been two or three millions of people in the city; the Romans surrounded it with troops, trenches, and walls, that none might escape. The three different factions within murdered one another. Titus did all in his power to persuade them to an advantageous surrender, but they scorned every proposal. The multitudes of unburied carcases corrupted the air, and produced a pestilence. The people fed on one another; and even ladies, it is said, boiled their suckling infants, and ate them. After a siege of six months, the city was taken. The Romans murdered almost every Jew they met. Titus was bent to save the temple, but could not: six thousand Jews who had taken shelter in it were all burned or murdered. The whole city, except three towers and a small part of the wall, was razed to the ground; and the foundations of the temple and other places were ploughed up. At Jerusalem alone, it is said, 1,100,000 perished by sword, famine, and pestilence. In other places we hear of 250,000 that were cut off, besides vast numbers that were sent into Egypt to labor as slaves. — Whedon.

no must go on in the old old way - simpler man here
and a purer life - more faith, more love
except ye become as little children

21. Then flee to the mountains. Rather, upon the mountains; i.e., to a refuge beyond them. Eusebius tells us that at the siege of Jerusalem, the Christians, divinely directed, fled to Pella, a city of Perea. When you see the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9: 27; 12: 11), do not imagine that the end has come (the end of the world, and the establishment of the temple under Christ), and abide in Jerusalem (waiting for the coming of the Messiah). Flee the suffering of that time. — Abbott.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Flee to the mountains. But how were they to escape when the invaders? Josephus informs us that when Cestius, the Roman general, might speedily, he led his army away "without any just occasion in the world." It is to express his surprise at the conduct of this commander. But we could have it was that God's people might have an opportunity to retire to the mountain who had cried, "Crucify him," were crucified themselves with their children; famine was doing its work along those crowded streets, there were no Christians gone to Pella. — Rev. D. Nelson. This is a beautiful illustration of one way are saved.

II. We see clearly from St. Luke that our Lord expressly warned the ing though many of the signs which he predicted would be followed by the immediate epoch in the world's history, on the other hand the great consummation, it would not follow at once, nor were they to be alarmed by the troubles and come into any instant or feverish expectancy. In fact, when once we have grasped Jesus was speaking partly and primarily of the fall of the Jewish polity and and secondarily of the end of the world, we shall then avoid being misled by erroneous impressions, and shall bear in mind that before the final end Jesus events. The first of these was a long treading under foot of Jerusalem, until the tiles (the *καίτοι ἐθνῶν*, i.e., their whole opportunities under the Christian dispensation fulfilled; the second was a preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to all nations. He prophesied of dreadful persecutions, of abounding iniquity, of decaying civilization, as the signs of a coming end. And as we learn from many other passages these signs, as they did usher in the destruction of Jerusalem, so shall re-appear before the end of all things is at hand. Accordingly this question of the apostle the great Eschatological Discourse, or Discourse of the Last Things, of which the notes are, "beware," and "watch," and "endure," and "pray."

III. In the Jewish legend, Nimrod casts Abraham into a furnace of fire, and him into a bed of roses. In Goethe's Faust, the angels cast roses upon the demon as it touches them becomes a drop of liquid, scorching fire. So even God's people midst of the fiercest persecutions; while apostles, teachers, Bibles, Christ himself, sent to the wicked for their salvation, as to Jerusalem, are yet turned by themselves. — Schleiermacher.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 8.) The danger that we may be deceived.
2. We can be saved from deception, by keeping close to Christ.
3. (Verses 9-11.) The Christian need have no fears amid the wars and commotions of the world, because God will control them to the coming of his kingdom.
4. Men are so bad that only by great wars, troubles, and upheavals can the evil be destroyed, and Christ reign on the earth.
5. (Verses 12, 13.) Even persecutions and trials bear witness to the faithfulness of Christ's promises.
6. (Verses 14, 15.) God will guide and teach us in every trying time.
7. (Verses 16-18.) Many troubles come upon the Christian, but Christ will not let one of them harm him in the least.
8. (Verse 19.) They who give their souls to Christ, and they only, possess their souls.
9. It is only by patience that we can acquire true possession of our souls.
10. (Verses 20, 21.) In the greatest dangers Christ opens a way for his children's escape.
11. Faith saves us, as these Christians' faith in Christ's promise led them to leave Jerusalem and go to Pella, so that not one perished.

LESSON IX. — DECEMBER 1, 1878.

THE LORD'S SUPPER. — LUKE 22: 10-20.

Thursday evening, April 5, A.D. 30; 14th of Nisan.
 Jerusalem; in the upper room of a private house.
 Niberius Caesar, 17th year as emperor of Roman Empire; Pontius Pilate, 5th year,
 A.D. 30; Herod Antipas, 34th year, tetrarch of Galilee.

THE CONNECTION.

Thursday evening of Thursday — Green Thursday, as it used to be called during the middle ages. The conversation took place between Jesus and his disciples about the paschal feast. Where he wished the preparation for it to be made. As he had now withdrawn from the temple, and was spending this Thursday, as he had spent the previous day, in complete seclusion, he probably expected that he would eat the passover at Bethany, which for such purposes was considered by rabbinical authority to be within the limits of Jerusalem. But his plans were frustrated, the true Paschal Lamb, was to be sacrificed once and forever in the Holy City, Jerusalem, on that in that very passover, and on the very same day, some 260,000 of those who were the antitype were destined to be slain. Accordingly he sent Peter and John to prepare for them a sign both mysterious and secret. — *Farrar*. The exact time for killing the paschal lamb was on the 14th of Nisan, "between the evenings," and it seems most probable that the lamb was killed soon after the evening sacrifice, allowing for the time of roasting it, would bring the paschal supper to the usual paschal meal, and so within the 14th day. *The feast of the passover itself*, in other words, *the feast of unleavened bread*, did not properly begin till after sunset and the paschal meal of the 15th of Nisan was the first day of the feast. But as all leaven was scrupulously removed from the house on the 14th, in preparation for the feast, it was not unnatural to call this the 14th day, and Matthew and Mark have it, "the first day, of unleavened bread." These considerations help in deciding the important question, Was the supper which our Lord ate on Thursday evening the true paschal supper? or did the latter fall on the 15th of Nisan, the same as that of his crucifixion? The truth of the former view could never be proved, had we possessed the first three Gospels only. They expressly call the supper the evening of the passover. There are, however, passages in St. John's narrative of the supper, which seem to suggest the inference that the passover was yet to be eaten on the 15th; but all these passages admit of another explanation. — *Smith*. Farrar and others regard this feast not as the real passover, but a preparatory one. For reasons see *Smith*, *Alford's* "New Testament for English Readers;" and compare with William *Beane's* *History*, *Abbott's Notes on Matthew*, and *Robinson's Harmony*, on the other side.

10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow

him into the house where he entereth in.

11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master

EXPLANATORY.

10. He said unto them. There can be no question that this direction was given them in superhuman foresight. — *Alford*. The city. Jerusalem: see Connection. A man meet you. This person carrying water would probably be a slave, and the time toward evening, the usual hour of fetching water. — *Alford*. Pitcher of water. With peculiar beauty does a man bearing a pitcher of water meet the disciples on their going to prepare the passover, that hence the design of this passage might be illustrated in its effect of entirely washing away the sins of the whole world. For the water is the laver of grace; and the pitcher denotes the frailty of those human instruments by whom this grace was to be administered to the world. — *Bede*. Follow him. The Lord knew they would be welcome there, therefore they could go in freely.

11. The goodman of the house. A man of some wealth, and could not be identified with

saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

12 And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

14 And¹ when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until² it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

¹ Matt. 26: 20. Mark 14: 17. ² ch. 14: 15. 1 Cor. 5: 7, 8. Rev. 19: 9.

the water-carrier. — *Alford*. Conjectured by some to have been Joseph of Arimathea, by others John Mark. — *Farrar*. Others think that he was an entire stranger, and that the ease with which he received the disciples and made all the arrangements may be accounted for by the fact that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were accustomed to receive strange Jews, and accommodate them, at the time of the passover feast. The latter view seems perhaps the more probable of the two. — *Ryle*. Guest-chamber. Not as in ch. 2: 7, an inn; but a room set apart at this season of the feast, by residents of Jerusalem, in which parties coming from the country might eat the passover. — *Alford*.

12. A large upper room. Perhaps the very room where three days afterwards the apostles first saw their risen Saviour; perhaps the very room where, amid the sound of a rushing mighty wind, each meek brow was first litred with Pentecost flame. — *Farrar*. Furnished. The word rendered furnished means literally spread; that is, spread with carpets, and with couches on which to recline at the table, after the manner of the East. — *Barnes*.

13. They made ready the passover. We may suppose that the following things were required, in order to make ready: the lamb, the wine, the bitter herbs, and the unleavened bread. These things being procured and placed in order, the upper room was ready. — *Ryle*. The lamb was killed by the priest in the court of the temple, whence the owner of the lamb received it, brought it to his house in Jerusalem, roasted it, and ate it in the evening. — *Jacobus*.

14. It was towards the evening, probably, when the gathering dusk would prevent all needless observation, that Jesus and his disciples walked from Bethany, by that old familiar road over the Mount of Olives, which his sacred feet were never again destined to traverse until after death. — *Farrar*. The hour was come. The hour for eating the passover. Thursday evening, after dark, which was counted by them as the beginning of the next day, Friday, 15th of Nisan, April 6. He sat down; "reclined." When they arrived the meal was ready, the table spread, the *triclinia* laid with cushions for the guests. Imagination loves to reproduce all the probable details of that deeply moving and eternally sacred scene; and, if we compare the notices of ancient Jewish custom with the immemorial fashions still existing in the changeless East, we can feel but little doubt as to the general nature of the arrangements. They were totally unlike those with which the genius of Leonardo da Vinci and other great painters has made us so familiar. The room probably had white walls, and was bare of all except the most necessary furniture and adornment. The couches or cushions, each large enough to hold three persons, were placed around three sides of one or more low tables of gayly painted wood, each scarcely higher than stools. — *Farrar*. And the twelve. Judas was with them; but, according to John 13: 30, he retired immediately after the sop given him during the passover, and was not present at the institution of the Lord's Supper. According to this view, Luke 22: 21-23, occurred earlier in the supper than he seems to place it. He was giving the facts, not the exact order of events. Others accept the order of Luke, and in that case Judas was with them at the supper. We cannot tell with any certainty whether this took place before or after the institution of the Lord's Supper, — whether Judas partook or not of those hallowed symbols. — *Farrar*.

15. With desire I have desired, &c. This is a Hebrew form of speech, signifying, "I have desired exceedingly." Some refer it to the whole work of redemption which he was about to accomplish that week, and the strong desire which he felt to accomplish it. Others refer it to the institution of the Lord's Supper, and the affectionate desire which our Lord felt to leave this parting memorial of himself among his disciples before he died. *Ryle*. Before I suffer — this death on the cross. The passover began by filling each guest a cup of wine, over which the head of the family pronounced a benediction. After this the hands were washed in a basin of water, and a table was brought in, on which were placed the bitter herbs, the unleavened bread, the *charoseth* (a dish made

19 ¶ And¹ he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave

¹ 1 Cor. 10: 16; 11: 24, &c.

19. And he took. In Matt. 26: 26, it is said that he did this "as they were eating," clearly indicating that the Lord's Supper was instituted during the progress of the paschal supper, not as a separate ordinance at its close. — *Abbott. Bread.* A round cake or cracker of unleavened bread. *Gave thanks.* In Matthew and Mark it is "blessed;" in 1 Cor. 11: 24, it is "gave thanks," as here. The two are closely allied, and no doubt he did both. It is a proof of the wonderful love of Jesus, that he could, on the verge of his great sufferings, give thanks for his broken body and shed blood, because he foresaw the wondrous benefits they would confer upon man. Note, also, that the communion season for us is a feast of joy and gladness. The soul is elevated in it to its highest state of rest and communion with God, where peace flows like a river. And *brake it.* This *breaking* of the bread represented the sufferings of Jesus about to take place, — his body *broken* or wounded for sin. Hence Paul (1 Cor. 11: 24) adds, "This is my body which is broken for you." — *Barnes.* This is my body. I look at a map, and say, "This is England; that is France." I point to a picture, and say, "That is Luther." I show you a bust, and say, "This is Julius Cæsar." These things, you know, are nothing more than representations. What does Paul say of Ishmael's mother? "For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia" (Gal. 4: 25). He says, too, of the rock that Israel drank from in the wilderness, "And that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10: 4). It represented Christ, who was smitten for us. In like manner, how beautifully do the bread and the wine represent his blessed body and blood! — *J. Cowper Grey.* In remembrance of me. This feast (1) signifies God's unspeakable gift in his Son Jesus, crucified to make atonement for our sins. (2) It reminds us of the life of Christ, ministering rather than to be ministered unto, which should be the model of our lives. (3) It is our passover, our salvation from the bondage and death of sin. (4) It shows us how Christ's body was broken for us on the cross, — as the

wheat is bruised to make bread, the grapes crushed to form wine, and the bread broken before it can be eaten. (5) Our spiritual life is derived from Christ. He is the food of the soul, as bread is of the body. (6) We must partake of him by faith, as we must eat the bread. (7) It sanctifies our daily life by using these common acts of eating and drinking as types of the highest spiritual things. (8) It is a prophecy of future blessedness, when we shall sit down to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. (9) It is a symbol of our intimate communion with God. (10) It is a symbol of our communion with one another. Eating bread together is the seal of friendship and alliance. (11) In the breaking and distribution to others, there may be an expression of our duty to distribute to others what we receive from him. (12) This is no selfish observance, as it were saying, "We thank God we few are saved, no matter what becomes of the rest;" but the communion service is the holding up before the world the wonderful love of God in the Crucified One. It is the proclaiming to all that here is salvation, here forgiveness, here is food for every need of the soul. Come, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved.

20. **Likewise the cup.** Supposed to be the third cup of the passover. After supper. After the bread had been eaten. **The new testament.** The Greek word for "testament" should be rendered *covenant*. And *the fruit of the vine* is the symbol of the new covenant; that is, the covenant of the new dispensation in the place of the covenant of Moses. A covenant is a compact by which two parties stipulate mutual things. Covenants were anciently made and ratified by or in the blood of a victim sacrificed by the parties. The old covenant in blood, made by God through Moses, is found in Exod. 24: 3-8. The blood by which that covenant was sanctioned was the blood of slain beasts. But this is the covenant ratified by or in the blood of the Lamb of God. — *Whedon*. **Shed for you.** "For the remission of your sins" (Matt. 26: 28). The blood of Jesus not only secures pardon, but cleanseth from all sin (1 John 1: 7). The object of his death is that we may have eternal life, and be redeemed from all iniquity. The sins of the world are put away by Christ, not merely through the influence of his life, teachings, and example, but by his blood poured out for a sinful world. As by the bread he emphasizes the truth that our spiritual life depends on our receiving his Spirit into our hearts, so by the wine he emphasizes the truth that his covenant or promise of grace depends on the pouring out of his blood, a sacrifice for our sins. — *Abbott*.

The sequence of the transactions during the supper appears to have been the following: The taking of their places at table; the contention (Luke 22: 21-23); the first cup of wine (Luke 22: 17); the washing of the disciples' feet, and reproof (John 13: 1-10); the pointing out of the traitor (John 13: 21-35); the foretelling of Peter's denial (John 13: 36-38); institution of the Lord's Supper. — *Robinson's Harmony*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. Eating together. A missionary once said that one of the great hinderances to the thorough Christianization of the heathen was the fact that the family never ate together. Husband and wife ate separately; the children came to their meals at any time; and there was no family gathering at meals as with us. It is a great blessing for the family of Christ to come and eat together. Eating becomes a spiritual and ennobling act when thus used as a symbol of union with Christ and one another.

II. Union in Christ. Charles Reed, M.P., of England, said at the Evangelical Alliance that he had in his library an old book describing the various sects of religion. The book belonged to his grandmother, and she had drawn on the fly-leaf a rough diagram of a circle, with lines drawn from the circumference like spokes in a wheel. On these converging lines she had written the names of the various sects, with Christ at the centre; and underneath all, this legend: "The nearer to Christ, the nearer to each other."

III. A most perfect picture of joining the church, with its hinderances, blessings, and communion, is found in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," when Christian comes to the Palace Beautiful.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 10.) God opens the way for his disciples where he wants them to go.
2. (Verse 11.) Blessed are those who open their houses to Christ's disciples, for they often entertain more than angels unawares.
3. (Verse 14.) Where Christ's people are, there is he with them.
4. (Verse 16.) Earthly ordinances are a shadow of heavenly experiences.
5. (Verse 18.) God's kingdom is sure to come.
6. (Verse 19.) Christ is the food of the soul. We truly live by him alone.
7. The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.
8. It is sad that we need any reminder of what Christ has done for us.

9. It is good that we have a reminder which we may hold up before the world, as well as to our own hearts, of the love of God in Christ.

10. Saints draw nearer to one another as they draw nearer to Jesus.

11. The greatest joy and the greatest sorrow are often joined together.

12. The communion is a feast of joy.

LESSON X.—DECEMBER 8, 1878.

THE CROSS.—LUKE 23: 33-46.

TIME. Friday, April 6, A. D. 30; from 9 o'clock, A.M., to 3 o'clock, P.M.

PLACE. Calvary, just without the gate of Jerusalem.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Roman Empire; Pontius Pilate, præcurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, — both subject to Rome.

THE CONNECTION.

The events after the Lord's Supper, which was the subject of our last lesson, took place in the following order (*Robinson's Harmony*): —

(1) Thursday evening, April 5, at the supper-table in the upper room in Jerusalem, Jesus comforts his disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit (John 14).

(2) Arising from the table, and standing in the same room, he speaks to them the words of John 15 and 16.

(3) Then he prays the prayer recorded in John 17.

(4) Then he retires with his disciples from Jerusalem that same evening, to the Mount of Olives, and suffers the agony in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22: 39-46).

(5) On the Mount of Olives he is betrayed by Judas (Luke 22: 47-53).

(6) That same night he is brought before Calaphas, in Jerusalem, and Peter denies him (Luke 22: 54-62).

(7) Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrim, and mocked (Luke 22: 63-71).

(8) The Sanhedrim lead him to Pilate (Luke 23: 1-5) early Friday morning.

(9) Jesus is sent by Pilate to Herod, in another part of Jerusalem (Luke 23: 6-12).

(10) Pilate seeks to release Jesus (Luke 23: 13-25).

(11) Pilate delivers up Jesus. He is scourged and mocked. Jerusalem. (Matt. 27: 26-30.)

(12) Judas repents, and hangs himself (Matt. 27: 3-10).

(13) Jesus is led away to be crucified, from Jerusalem to Calvary (Luke 23: 26-33).

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

34 Then said Jesus, Father,¹

¹ Matt. 5: 44. Acts 7: 60. 1 Cor. 4: 12.

EXPLANATORY.

When they were come; i.e., Jesus and the two malefactors, bearing their crosses, with the soldiers and the crowds. It was drawing towards 9 o'clock, Friday morning, the usual hour of the morning sacrifice. The crucifixion was ended at 3 o'clock, the hour of the evening sacrifice. Calvary. Called Golgotha in Matthew and Mark. *Golgotha* is Hebrew, and *Calvary* Latin; both meaning the same thing, — a *skull*. Why it was so called is not known. It may conceivably have been a well-known place of execution; or, possibly, the name may imply a bare, rounded, skull-like elevation. It is constantly called the "*hill* of Golgotha," or of Calvary; but the Gospels merely call it "a place," and not a hill (Matt. 27: 33. Mark 15: 22). Respecting its site, volumes have been written, but nothing is known. It is far better for the purity of the Christian religion that this be so, lest such places be regarded as special means of holiness, when all true holiness is spiritual, in the heart. Crucified him. It had been the custom of wealthy ladies in Jerusalem to provide a draught of wine medicated with some powerful opiate as a stupefying potion, at their own expense. It was probably taken freely by the two malefactors; but, when they offered it to Jesus, he would not take

34 Under compassion - 35 - the chosen one -
 Pa 89: 19, 27

forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them¹ derided him, saying, He

¹ Pa. 22: 7.

It. The refusal was an act of sublimest heroism. The effect of the draught was to dull the nerves, to cloud the intellect, to provide an anæsthetic against some part, at least, of the lingering agonies of that dreadful death. But He whom some modern sceptics have been base enough to accuse of feminine feebleness and cowardly despair preferred rather "to look death in the face," to meet the king of terrors without striving to deaden the force of one agonizing anticipation, or to still the throbbing of one lacerated nerve.

The three crosses were laid on the ground; that of Jesus, which was doubtless taller than the other two, being placed, in bitter scorn, in the midst. Perhaps the cross-beam was now nailed to the upright; and certainly the title, which had either been borne by Jesus, fastened round his neck, or carried by one of the soldiers in front of him, was now nailed to the summit of his cross. Then he was stripped naked of all his clothes, and then followed the most awful moment of all. He was laid down upon the implement of torture. His arms were stretched along the cross-beams, and at the centre of the open palms the point of a huge iron nail was placed, which, by the blow of a mallet, was driven home into the wood. Then through either foot separately, or possibly through both together, as they were placed one over the other, another huge nail tore its way through the quivering flesh. Whether the sufferer was *also* bound to the cross, we do not know; but, to prevent the hands and feet being torn away by the weight of the body, which could not "rest upon nothing but four great wounds," there was, about the centre of the cross, a wooden projection strong enough to support, at least in part, a human body, which soon became a weight of agony. It was probably at this moment of inconceivable horror that the voice of the Son of man was heard calmly praying in divine compassion for his brutal and pitiless murderers — ay, and for all who in their sinful ignorance crucify him afresh forever, — "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO." And then the accursed tree — with its living human burden hanging upon it in helpless agony, and suffering fresh tortures as every movement irritated the fresh rents in hand and feet — was slowly heaved up by strong arms, and the end of it fixed firmly in a hole dug deep in the ground for that purpose. The feet were but a little raised above the earth. The victim was in full reach of every hand that might choose to strike, in close proximity to every source of insult and hatred.

A death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of the horrible and ghastly — dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds, — all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries, especially of the head and stomach, became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and, while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst. Such was the death to which Christ was doomed. — *Farrar*. And the malefactors. Two brigands and rebels of the lowest stamp. *Farrar*. This, let it be noted, was a literal fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, that Messiah was to be "numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53: 12). — *Ryle*.

34. Father, forgive them. These words were probably spoken while our Lord was being nailed to the cross, or as soon as the cross was reared up on end. It is worthy of remark, that as soon as the blood of the great Sacrifice began to flow, the great High Priest began to intercede. — *Ryle*. They know not what they do. The principle involved in this saying deserves notice, and requires fencing with two preliminary remarks. On the one hand, we must beware of supposing that ignorance is not blameworthy, and that ignorant persons *deserve* to be forgiven their sins. All spiritual ignorance is more or less culpable. It is part of man's sin, that he does not know better than he does. On the other hand, we cannot fail to observe in Scripture that sins of ignorance are less sinful before God than sins of knowledge, and that no case is apparently so hopeless as that of the man who sins wilfully against light. Our Lord's meaning in the words before us appears to be that those who crucified him did not at the time know the full amount of the wickedness they were committing. They knew that they were crucifying one whom they regarded as an impostor. They did not know that they were actually crucifying their own Messiah, the Son of God. The question naturally arises, "Who were those for whom our Lord prayed?" I cannot, as some do, confine his prayer to the Roman sol-

saved others ; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar.

37 And saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.

38 And a superscription also was

written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

39 ¶ And one¹ of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40 But the other answering re-

¹ ch. 17 : 34-36.

diers who nailed him to the cross : I rather regard it as applying to the great bulk of the Jewish people who were standing by, and aiding and abetting his crucifixion. — *Ryle*. Parted his raiment, and cast lots. The execution was carried out, and the cross watched, by a guard of four soldiers, with a centurion; and the garments of the sufferers were their perquisite. Four parts being made, there remained the upper robe, woven throughout without a seam, the type of Christ's perfect righteousness, and the source of healing to many who had touched it. As it would have been spoiled by dividing it, the soldiers decided to cast lots for it, thus fulfilling another prophecy: "They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots" (Ps. 22: 18). This has given occasion to the remark that Christians have, in their party divisions, paid less respect to their Master than the heathen soldiers did. — *Smith*.

35. The people stood. They not only looked on, but some at least joined (see Matthew and Mark) in reviling him. The rulers are the chief priests and members of the Sanhedrim. They were not ashamed to disgrace their gray hairs by such reproaches. — *Alford*. He saved others. Saved them by his miracles from disease and death. Let him save himself. This is the true test miracle, they imply: if he can be crucified, he is not the Christ. This argument, derived from the rulers, satisfies the people. — *Whedon*. But he could not have saved others, if he had thus saved himself. If he be Christ. The Messiah. It should read, "The Christ of God, the elect one."

36. The soldiers. The guard. Offering him vinegar. Not the medicated potion offered just before crucifixion, but the *paseca*, or sour wine which was their common drink. It was about the time of their noon meal; and they may, in mockery, have asked him to join in it.

37. The king of the Jews. As the Jews derided his claim to be Messiah, so the Roman soldiers, who little knew the meaning of that, derided his claim to be king of the Jews, which they did understand. "The cross and the apparent weakness were, as usual, the stumbling-stone in both cases."

38. Superscription. On the projecting upright beam of the cross. This custom of writing up the culprit's crime on a scroll above his head gave Pilate another opportunity of mortifying the Jews, while bearing unconscious witness to the truth. — *Smith*. Greek . . . Latin . . . Hebrew. All careful readers of the Bible must have observed that the superscription placed over our Lord's head on the cross is variously given by the Gospel-writers. Each one reports it in a manner slightly different from the other three. This apparent discrepancy has given rise to various explanations. In order to solve the difficulty, we must remember that the superscription was written in three different languages. Greek was the language best known in the world at the time when our Lord was crucified; and there was a Greek superscription, for the benefit of strangers from foreign parts. Latin was the language of the Romans; and there was a Latin superscription, because the sentence on our Lord was passed by a Latin judge, and executed by Latin soldiers. Hebrew was the language of the Jews; and there was a superscription in the Hebrew tongue, because Jesus was crucified as a Jew, that all Jews might see it. But, for any thing we know, the superscription in each language may have slightly varied from the superscription in other languages. Matthew may have recorded it as it was in Hebrew; Mark, as it was in Latin; Luke, as it was in Greek. — *Ryle*. That John's was the exact form may be safely inferred from St. John's presence at the cross, where the words were before his eyes for all that memorable six hours, and from his care to specify the languages in which it was written. — *Smith*. The king of the Jews. Let it be observed that our Lord was crucified at last as a king. He came to set up a spiritual kingdom, and as a king he died. — *Ryle*.

39. One of the malefactors. Matthew and Mark speak of the malefactors as deriding him, speaking in general of them as reviling, without noting from which one the railing came. Farrar thinks that at first the other faintly joined in the reproaches. Which were hanged; on the

*of Christ as a Royal priest-king, may all stand near to God - removal of the veil, Sept 9, 3-16.
"10:18-21"*

LUKE 23: 38-46.

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buked him, saying, Dost not thou fear¹ God, seeing thou art in the same² condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing³ amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord,

remember⁴ me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him. Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.⁵

44 And⁶ it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

¹ Ps. 36: 1. ² Jer. 5: 3. ³ 1 Pet. 1: 19. ⁴ Ps. 106: 4, 5. Rom. 10: 9, 10. 1 Cor. 6: 10, 11. 2 Cor. 12: 4. Rev. 2: 7. ⁵ Matt. 27: 45. Mark 15: 33.

cross. **Save thyself and us.** He could not see how one could be the Messiah, and have the power to save himself, and not do it. But Jesus soon showed him what his salvation meant, in his words to the other malefactor.

40. **The other.** It is probable that he had met Jesus before, and heard him, and perhaps been one of those thousands who had seen his miracles. There is indeed no authority for the legend which assigns to him the name of Dysmas, or for the beautiful story of his having saved the life of the Virgin and her child during their flight into Egypt. But on the plains of Gennesareth, perhaps from some robber's cave in the wild ravines of the Valley of the Doves, he may well have approached his presence,—he may well have been one of those publicans and sinners who drew near to him for to hear him.—*Farrar.* Dost not thou fear God. The silence of the penitent is broken by the use of the other, compromising him in the scoff.—*Alford.* Same condemnation. That is, not for the same offence, but condemned to the same punishment.—*Jacobus.*

41. **Due reward of our deeds.** The proper punishment for our crimes. They had been highwaymen, and it was just that they should die.—*Barnes.* Amiss. Literally, *unseemly*. This is a remarkable testimony to the innocence of Jesus, from one who was probably executed for his share in those very tumults which he was accused of having excited.—*Alford.*

42. **Lord, remember me.** This short prayer contained a very large and long creed, the articles whereof are these. (1) He believed that the soul died not with the body of man; (2) that there is a world to come for rewarding the pious and penitent, and for punishing the impious and impenitent; (3) that Christ, though now under crucifying and killing tortures, yet had right to a kingdom; (4) that this kingdom was in a better world than the present evil world; (5) that Christ would not keep this kingdom all to himself; (6) that he would bestow a part and portion thereof on those that are truly penitent; (7) that the key of this kingdom did hang at Christ's girdle, though he now hung dying on the cross; (8) that he does roll his whole soul for eternal salvation upon a dying Saviour.—*Ness.* Comest into thy kingdom; rather, in thy kingdom, "at thy coming in thy kingdom." The thief had heard of the popular rumor of his kingdom. His faith lays hold on the truth that this is the king of the Jews in a higher and immortal sense. There is nothing so astounding in this man's faith dogmatically considered, as has been thought; he merely joins the common belief of the Jews of a Messianic kingdom, with the conviction that Jesus is the Messiah. What is really astounding is the power and strength of that faith, which amidst shame and pain and mockery could thus lift itself to the apprehension of the crucified as this king. The thief would fill a conspicuous place in a list of the triumphs of faith supplemental to Heb. 11.—*Alford.*

43. **To-day.** The attempt to join this with "I say unto thee" ("Verily I say unto thee this day"), considering that it not only violates common sense, but destroys the force of our Lord's promise, is something worse than silly. This work of the Lord I believe to have been accomplished on the instant of his death, and the penitent to have followed him at his death—some little time after—into the paradise of God.—*Alford.* With me in paradise. What is this paradise? The word is used of the Garden of Eden by the LXX. (Gen. 2: 8, &c.), and subsequently became, in the Jewish theology, the name for that part of Hades, the abode of the dead, where the souls of the righteous await the resurrection. It was also the name for a supernal or heavenly abode. See 2 Cor. 12: 4, Rev. 2: 7; which are the only other places in which it occurs in the New Testament. That this is not fulness of glory as yet, is evident, for the glorified body is not yet joined to their spirits; but it is a degree of bliss compared to which their former degree was but an imprisonment.—*Alford.*

44. **About the sixth hour.** Twelve o'clock, noon. **Darkness.** It could have been no darkness of any natural eclipse, for the paschal moon was at the full; but it was one of those "signs from heaven" for which, during the ministry of Jesus, the Pharisees had so often clamored in vain. The early fathers appealed to Pagan authorities—the historian Phallus, the chronicler Phlegon—

St. Paul for Mrs. —

I trust my Spout

45 And the sun was darkened, and ¹the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

46 ¶ And when Jesus had cried

with a loud voice, he said,² Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:³ and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

¹ Matt. 27: 51. Mark 15: 38. ² Ps. 31: 5. 1 Pet. 2: 23. ³ Matt. 27: 50. Mark 15: 37. John 19: 30.

for such a darkness; but we have no means of testing the accuracy of these references, and it is quite possible that the darkness was a local gloom, which hung densely over the guilty city and its immediate neighborhood. — *Farrar*. Over all the earth. The same word is translated "land" in Matthew and Mark. It would be night naturally over half the globe. The question is, Are we to understand that part of it over which there was day? I believe we are. But there is no strong objection to any limitation, providing the fact itself, as happening at Jerusalem, is distinctly recognized. — *Alford*. Till the ninth hour. Three o'clock in the afternoon, when he died.

45. The sun was darkened. The cause of the darkness spoken of in verse 44. The veil of the temple. This was the veil, curiously wrought, which separated the holy from the most holy place, dividing the temple into two apartments. — *Barnes*. Was rent. Into two parts. This took place just at his death. Thus "the way into the holiest of all was (now) made manifest," and laid open to all nations. The sacred ceremonies of the day of atonement, when the high priest entered into the most holy place, were now to be dispensed with. Believers have boldness to enter into the holiest by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil; that is to say, his flesh. The priest was probably burning incense in the holy place at this hour of the evening sacrifice. — *Jacobus*. There was also an earthquake, and many of the saints rose from the dead.

46. Cried with a loud voice. The *Ell, Ell, &c.*, of Matt. 27: 46; or the "It is finished," John 19: 30. And now the end was come. Once more, in the words of the sweet Psalmist of Israel (Ps. 31: 5), but adding to them that title of trustful love which, through him, is permitted to the use of all mankind, "Father," he said, "into thy hands I commend my spirit." Then with one more great effort he uttered the last cry, — the one victorious word *Τετέλεσται*, "It is finished." It may be that that great cry ruptured some of the vessels of his heart; for no sooner had it been uttered than he bowed his head upon his breast, and yielded his life, "a ransom for many," — a willing sacrifice to his heavenly Father. "Finished was his holy life; with his life his struggle, with his struggle his work, with his work the redemption, with the redemption the foundation of the new world." As the centurion stood opposite to the cross, and saw the Saviour die, he glorified God, and exclaimed, "This man was in truth righteous," — nay, more, "This man was a Son of God." Even the multitude, utterly sobered from their furious excitement and frantic rage, began to be weighed down with a guilty consciousness that the scene which they had witnessed had in it something more awful than they could have conceived; and as they returned to Jerusalem they wailed, and beat upon their breasts. Well might they do so! This was the last drop in a full cup of wickedness: this was the beginning of the end of their city and name and race. And in truth that scene was more awful than they or even we can know. The secular historian, be he ever so sceptical, cannot fail to see in it the central point of the world's history. Whether he be a believer in Christ or not, he cannot refuse to admit that this new religion grew from the smallest of all seeds to be a mighty tree, so that the birds of the air took refuge in its branches; that it was the little stone cut without hands, which dashed into pieces the colossal image of heathen greatness, and grew till it became a great mountain and filled the earth. Alike to the infidel and to the believer, the crucifixion is the boundary instant between ancient and modern days. Morally and physically, no less than spiritually, the faith of Christ was the Palingenesis of the world. It came like the dawn of a new spring to nations "effete with the drunkenness of crime." The struggle was long and hard, but from the hour when Christ died began the death-knell to every Satanic tyranny and every tolerated abomination. From that hour holiness became the universal ideal of all who name the name of Christ as their Lord, and the attainment of that ideal the common heritage of souls in which his spirit dwells. — *Farrar*.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. "See Naples, and die," says the old adage. Dr. Storrs in his address to the members of the Evangelical Alliance improved on it, — "See America, and live." We may go to the superlative, and say, "See the cross of Christ, and live forever."

II. Dr. J. P. Thompson relates the story of a German Catholic residing in New York, who had received from the priest, on leaving her native land, a charm to protect her on the voyage. It was a porcelain crucifix. She reached New York in safety, and had implicit faith in her crucifix, which

Jesus knew what it was to suffer and what it was to trust. That over our trials may be he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities and what over is our extremity he points

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she hung up in her chamber. One day, in arranging her furniture, a sudden jar brought the crucifix to the floor, and broke it into a hundred pieces. She wept because she had lost her Christ. "What shall I do? My Christ is broken to pieces." A German neighbor, a Protestant, said to her, "Do not grieve: I will show you how you can make up your loss. I keep the Saviour always in my heart." She went to church, and soon found the Saviour who could not be broken or lost.

III. Probably most of our readers have heard of the little church of "Domine, Quo Vadis?" near Rome, and the legend connected with the spot upon which it is built. After the burning of the Imperial city, so runs the story, Nero sought to fasten upon the Christians the accusation of having caused the conflagration. Hence arose the first of those terrible persecutions which destroyed the lives of so many of the early confessors of our holy faith. The Christian converts at Rome besought Peter not to expose his life, which appeared to them to be necessary to the prosperity, if not the very existence, of the then infant Church. After much persuasion, the apostle consented to flee from the scene of persecution. But while hurrying along the Appian Way, and before he had gone more than a mile or two from the city gates, he was met by a vision of our Saviour, crowned with thorns, and bearing his cross toward the place from which he himself had just fled. Filled with wonder at this unexpected sight, Peter exclaimed, "Domine, quo vadis?" ("Lord, whither goest thou?") To which the Lord, directing toward him a look of mingled grief and pity, replied, "I go to Rome to be crucified a second time." The vision then vanished; but Peter returned to the city, to suffer and die in the cause of the Master whom he had almost denied a second time.

IV. I once saw in the parlor of a parsonage a little picture, an original painting by the minister's daughter. It consisted of a bright, sparkling, jewelled crown, and in the distance a faint, fading cross; and under it written this legend:—

"Bidding my heart look up, not down,
While the cross fades before the crown."

V. A beautiful illustration is found in that poem of James T. Fields, where he describes his experience on finding the cross on the Alps, when he was lost in a blinding storm.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 33.) Calvary is the centre of the world's history, the Alcyone of the universe.
2. Christ suffered *with* sinners, and *for* sinners, as he will judge them,—the repentant on one hand, the unrepentant on the other.
3. (Verse 34.) When men reject Christ and his salvation, they know not what they do.
4. (Verse 35.) Men often deride and reject their best friends.
5. (Verse 38.) That which is said in mockery often becomes a glorified truth.
6. His kingship was written in the chief languages of the world,—a prophecy that he was to be a universal king.
7. (Verse 39.) Here is proof that suffering and death do not of themselves convert a soul.
8. (Verses 40-42.) The steps of the repentant thief: (1) acknowledgment of his sin, (2) confession that Christ is innocent, (3) faith in Jesus, (4) prayer.
9. (Verse 43.) Christ's amazing willingness to save sinners.
10. Salvation assured as soon as we believe.
11. How near the dying believer is to glory; no long sleep between.
12. One death-bed repentance is recorded in the Bible, that all may have hope; but *only* one, lest many should indulge in presumption.
13. The cost of salvation smites all indifference to religion. If Christ was willing to die that we may be saved, what ought we not to do?
14. Christ the wisdom and power of God; the wise and only solution of the great problem, how to save the sinner without increasing sin. The atonement makes men see (1) the evil of sin; (2) the value of salvation; (3) it touches the heart, the source of all goodness; (4) it satisfies the conscience; (5) it shows God's love, and thus kindles ours; (6) it touches the spring of all the great motive powers of the soul,—love, fear, hope, duty,—as nothing else has done, or that we can conceive as doing.

We turn to our Father and our Father to his God and our God all we who were sufficient into all things in his needs, and who is sufficient in all things in ours.

Jesus taught us how also how to die. Living, he went faithfully into business, and endured patiently the trials and pathway unto its end; dying, he rested himself in the hands of his loving Father. May this ministry which was also in Christ Jesus!

LESSON XI.—DECEMBER 15, 1878.

THE WALK TO EMMAUS.—LUKE 24: 13-32.

TIME. Sunday, April 8, A.D. 30, 17th of Nisan.

PLACE. Emmaus, about eight miles from Jerusalem, and the road leading to it.

RULERS. Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judæa; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

THE CONNECTION.

The body of Jesus was deposited in the sepulchre a little before sunset on Friday, so that he was almost 36 hours in the tomb, — being two nights and one intervening day. The resurrection was on the third day, — Sunday morning, April 8. The women who had come from Galilee had never lost sight of their Lord, from the time he was brought forth to be crucified until they noted the tomb in which he was laid. Knowing the haste in which the body had been deposited, it was their intention to come early in the morning after the sabbath, and dispose the body in a more orderly manner for its final rest. They saw, on coming to the sepulchre, that the body of Jesus had disappeared. — *Kitto*. But as yet no eye had seen him; and to Mary of Magdala — to her who loved most because she had been forgiven most, and out of whose soul, now ardent as flame and clear as crystal, he had cast seven devils — was this glorious honor first vouchsafed. — *Farrar*. It may be well to mention here the eleven distinct appearances of our Lord after his resurrection. He appeared, — 1. To Mary Magdalene alone (Mark 16. John 22: 14). 2. To the women returning from the sepulchre (Matt. 28: 9, 10). 3. To Simon Peter alone (Luke 24: 34). 4. To the two disciples going to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13, &c.). 5. To the apostles at Jerusalem, excepting Thomas, who was absent (John 20: 19). 6. To the apostles at Jerusalem a second time, when Thomas was present (John 20: 26, 29). 7. At the Sea of Tiberias, when seven disciples were fishing (John 21: 1). 8. To the eleven disciples, on a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28: 16). 9. To above five hundred brethren at once (1 Cor. 15: 6). 10. To James only (1 Cor. 15: 7). 11. To all the apostles on Mount Olivet at his ascension (Luke 24: 51). Three times we are told that his disciples touched him after he rose (Matt. 28: 9. Luke 24: 39. John 20: 27). Twice we are told that he ate with them (Luke 24: 42. John 21: 12, 13.). — *Ryle*. It was his fourth appearance which is described in to-day's lesson.

13 ¶ And, behold, two¹ of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed² together and

¹ Mark 16: 12. ² Ver. 36. Mal. 3: 16. Matt. 18: 20.

EXPLANATORY.

13. Two of them; that is, of the company named (verses 5 and 22), *not of the apostles*. Mark merely mentions the fact of this appearing, without giving the particulars (ch. 16: 12), according to his object, which was rather to note the fact that the belief in Christ's resurrection was most slowly received, and not until the proof was irresistible. One of the two was Cleopas (verse 18). The other is not known, and conjecture is vain. — *Jacobus*. "Since the apostle has not named the other, let each of you put *himself* in his place." — *Sier*. That same day. The same day of the resurrection; the day of the Christian sabbath. Emmaus (hot springs). The opinion has prevailed among Christian writers, that the Emmaus of Luke was identical with the Emmaus on the border of the plain of Philistia, afterward called Nicopolis, and which was about 20 miles from Jerusalem. A tradition of the 14th century identifies Emmaus with Kubelbeh, about three miles west of ancient Mizpeh, and nine from Jerusalem. Dr. Thomson ("Land and the Book," vol. II., p. 540) is inclined, with others, to locate Emmaus at Kuriet el Aineh, which he says "would be the proper distance from Jerusalem." All is mere conjecture. — *Whitney*. It is very likely that Emmaus was their home.

14. They talked together. They seem to have given up all for lost, and to have come to the conclusion that Jesus was not the Messiah. Their master had been crucified, contrary to their expectation; their hopes dashed, their anticipation disappointed; and they were now returning in

reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden¹ that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas,² answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known

the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a ³ prophet mighty⁴ in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 And ⁵ how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

21 But we trusted that it had

¹ John 20: 14, 15; 21: 4. ² John 19: 25. ³ ch. 7: 16. John 3: 2. Acts 2: 22. ⁴ Acts 7: 22. ⁵ ch. 23: 1. Acts 13: 27, 28.

sadness, and very naturally conversed, on the way, of the things which had happened in Jerusalem. — *Barnes*. Their conversation can be imagined from what they say to the Lord (verses 20-24). — *Jacobus*.

15. **Communed and reasoned.** Exchanged views and feelings, weighing afresh all the facts. — *J. F. and B.* Jesus himself drew near. From behind; see verse 18, where they take him for an inhabitant of Jerusalem. — *Alford*.

16. **But their eyes were holden.** Restrained. Mark says that Jesus appeared to them in *another form*. If their eyes were influenced, of course, optically speaking, Jesus would appear in *another form*. — *Whedon*. The reason they did not know him, was that *their eyes were supernaturally influenced*. No change took place in him. — *Alford*. The facts that they were not expecting him, that they were not his intimate disciples, and therefore not very familiar with his looks or voice, that they were so earnest in talking as not to take special pains to examine closely, will account largely for the holding of their eyes. — *Barnes*. **That they should not know him.** He did not discover himself to them as he did to Mary, but addressed them as a stranger. He aimed by this only to draw them out. So he spoke to the woman of Syrophenicia as a stranger, but soon revealed *himself as a friend, — the best friend*. This is the way of God's grace, to provoke our earnestness and acting-out of self at first, and then to show himself our Lord. So also to the disciples on the sea. — *Jacobus*.

17. **What manner of communications?** The words imply the earnest discussion that had appeared in their manner. — *J. F. and B.* He had apparently been walking with them some little time before this was said. The term used by our Lord implies that they had been disputing with some earnestness; but there is no *blame* implied in the word. Possibly, though both were sad, they may have taken *different views*, and in the answer of Cleopas we have that of the one who was most disposed to abandon all hope. — *Alford*.

18. **Cleopas.** This is different from the name in John 19: 25, and is shortened from Cleopatros, according to Alford and Olshausen. Lightfoot makes it the same name as Alpheus, whose son was the apostle James (Matt. 10: 3). **A stranger.** The term here used means rather *sojourner* than stranger. Alford reads, "Dost thou lodge alone at Jerusalem?" They took him for one who had been there at the feast, from a distance. We had rather read, "Dost thou *alone* sojourn at Jerusalem, and *not know* the things," &c. That is, Art thou the only one of all the sojourners there, who does not know? &c. — *Jacobus*. As if feeling it a relief to have some one to unburden his thoughts and feelings to, this disciple goes over the main facts in his own desponding style; and this was just what our Lord wished. — *J. F. and B.*

19, 20. **What things?** He who asks a question does not affirm that he does not know the answer. He may act as a teacher, a catechist, or an experimentalist, to draw out and develop the mind of another. This last was our Lord's design. — *Whedon*. **Concerning Jesus of Nazareth.** Now the stream of their lamentations over their disappointed expectations breaks loose. Their anguish of heart is especially remarkable, since it showed what the Lord was in their eyes, and remained, even in the moment when they had seen their dearest hopes vanish. The official name Christ they do not now take upon their lips; but, respecting the name Jesus of Nazareth, they presuppose that it is sufficiently familiar to every one in and out of Jerusalem. That he, although he had been reckoned among the transgressors, was a prophet and extraordinary messenger of God, such as, with the exception of John, had not appeared in Israel for centuries before, — this admitted of no doubt. As such he had attested himself by word and deed, not only in the eyes of the people,

been¹ he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women² also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre.

23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24 And certain³ of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

25 Then he said unto them,⁴ O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!

26 Ought⁵ not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter⁶ into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses⁷ and

¹ ch. 1: 68. Acts 1: 6. ² ver. 9, 10. ³ ver. 12. ⁴ Heb. 5: 11, 12. ⁵ ver. 46. Acts 17: 3. Heb. 9: 22, 23. ⁶ 1 Pet. 1: 3, 11. ⁷ ver. 44. Acts 3: 22.

but also before the face of God; and even after his death it is impossible for them to mention the name otherwise than with reverence and love. — *Lange*.

21. We trusted. We had hoped, is the idea. The trust is spoken of as *past*. We see in this opening of their views, the wise method of our Lord for the important object of drawing from them a familiar and plain declaration of their thoughts, and, besides, to obtain this testimony to the whole transaction. — *Jacobus*. He which should have redeemed Israel. The exact kind of redemption expected by the disciples, we are left to conjecture; but it is clear, that like most Jews, they looked much more for a temporal redeemer than a spiritual one. They looked for a redemption like that of their forefathers out of Egypt. Hence their excessive perplexity and amazement, when he who they thought would prove the redeemer was crucified. — *Ryle*. To redeem Israel doubtless included the idea of removing the Roman yoke; but it also implied the introduction of a reign of truth and righteousness. The third day. They doubtless here refer to the three days so often mentioned as connected with his death and burial. The period had passed, but the world was not renewed. — *Whedon*.

22. Yea, and; or, "but, moreover." This is equivalent to, Certainly, thus much has happened that "certain women," &c. — *Alford*. Something strange has taken place; but not such as to answer our expectations. — *Whedon*. Certain women. See Connection.

23. Found not his body. This does not refer to the first return of Mary, on seeing the stone rolled away; for a vision of angels is spoken of, and it is also hinted in the last clause of verse 24, that they reported having seen Christ. — *Jacobus*. This account is found in Matt. 28: 1-10.

24. Certain of them which were with us. Apostles. The visits of Peter and John are referred to. See John 20: 2-9.

25. O fools. The word rendered *fools* is more properly, *without understanding*. — *Alford*. Unbelief is not a mark of wisdom: it is a mark of folly. Unbelievers in the New Testament are often spoken of as without understanding (see Gal. 3: 1), "their mind and conscience defiled" (Tit. 1: 16). Sin has impaired the understanding so that natural reason blunders and stumbles at the plainest truths of God's word. — *Jacobus*. Slow of heart; i.e., *sluggish* — in disposition — to believe. These were both shown in their not having apprehended, from the fulfilment of the sufferings and death of Christ, the sequel of that death, — the resurrection. — *Alford*. All that the prophets have spoken. All the prophecies uttered in Old Testament times in regard to Christ's coming and death.

26. Ought not Christ — "the Christ," the Messiah — to suffer . . . and enter; i.e., through the gate of suffering (and suffering "these things," or such a death), to enter into his glory. "Ye believe in the glory; but these very sufferings are the predicted gate of entrance into it." — *J. F. and B.* The Lord speaks of a necessity that was grounded in this truth, namely, that all these things had been foretold. That which had been a matter of offence to them had been for this very reason, according to a higher order of things, inevitable; and they could not possibly have been so driven hither and thither, if they had given such heed as they ought to the prophetic annunciations respecting the suffering Messiah. What had seemed to them incompatible with the glory of the Messiah was precisely the appointed way thereto. — *Lange*.

27. Beginning. Beginning belongs to both the following clauses. A similar expression is found in Acts 3: 24. He began with Moses first: he began with each as he came to them. — *Alford*. He expounded. He explained or interpreted it to them. Probably he showed them that their notions of the Messiah were not according to the scriptures. In all the scriptures. In all the

all the prophets,¹ he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he² made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he³ took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn⁴ within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

¹ Acts 10: 43; 26: 22. ² Gen. 32: 26. Mark 6: 48. ³ Matt. 14: 19. ⁴ Ps. 39: 3. Jer. 20: 9; 23: 29.

writings of the old Testament. They were called *scriptures*, because they were *written*, — the art of printing being then unknown. — **The things concerning himself.** Concerning the Messiah. He showed what the scriptures foretold; and *they saw* that these things applied to Jesus of Nazareth, and began to be satisfied that he was the Messiah. — *Barnes.* I take *the things concerning himself*, to mean something very different from mere *prophetical passages*. The *whole scriptures* are a *testimony to him*; the whole history of the chosen people, with its types, and its law, and its prophecies, is a *showing forth of him*; and it was here the *whole*. Observe the testimony which this verse gives to the divine authority, and the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament scriptures; so that the denial of the references to Christ's death and glory in the Old Testament is henceforth *nothing less than a denial of his own teaching*. — *Alford.*

28. **Unto the village. Emmaus. Made as though.** Rather, *acted as though*; moved on his course, not in dissimulation, for he would have gone on his way sorrowfully and justly, if they had not detained him with loving violence.

29. **Constrained him.** Let it be noted that we have several instances of expressions like this in Scripture. Abraham (Gen. 32: 26), Gideon (Judg. 6: 18), Manoah (Judg. 13: 15), all show that God loves to be entreated of his people, and that those who would have much must ask much, and even use a holy violence. — *Ryle.* Jesus will not come and abide where he is not wanted. We must treat him at least as well as we would a common friend. (1) We must welcome him with warm hearts. (2) We must put away what is unpleasant. (3) We must entertain him, make his stay pleasant. (4) We must have sympathetic converse, and be at one as to his work and character. (5) We must press the invitation. Then he will ever abide in our hearts and homes and churches. **Abide with us.** Christ abiding with us, means (1) friendship with him; (2) rest in his love; (3) power to do his works.

30. **He took bread . . . blessed . . . brake . . . gave, &c.** The action mentioned here has occasioned much difference of opinion. (1) Some think that no particular sense is to be attached to the expression, and that it means that Jesus was recognized at the time when he brake bread. (2) Some think there was something peculiar in our Lord's manner and demeanor at breaking of bread, which was well known to the disciples. Among these is *Alford*. — *Ryle.* It is plain that this was not a sacramental, but an ordinary meal. — *Whedon.*

31. **And their eyes were opened.** It was as "he gave to them," that their eyes were opened. It is in his work of grace that he still reveals himself to us. It is as he gives to us himself in the broken body on the tree, that our eyes are opened. We do not know him till we see him in the very act of love to us sinners. How often at the sacramental board does Christ make himself known to his people, through the shadows and symbols in which he appears, so that we "discern the Lord's body"! But it is as he gives to us the elements, that we know him as our risen Lord, and adorable Saviour, the very crucified One. — *Jacobus.* **Vanished.** This also showed that it was he. — *Bengel.* He often proves himself to us as much by his withdrawing afterwards, as by his coming at first. — *Jacobus.*

32. **Did not our heart burn within us?** These words would be more literally rendered, "Was not our heart burning within us?" It is a strong expression to indicate the warmth and delight of their feelings while they listened to our Lord's exposition of scripture. See Ps. 39: 4, Jer. 20: 9. — *Ryle.* **While he talked with us.** Not merely "with them," but "to them." "Ah! this accounts for it. We could not understand the glow of self-evidencing light, love, glory, that

ravished our hearts; but now we do." They cannot rest; how could they? They must go straight back, and tell the news. — *J. F. and B.*

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. He expounded unto them . . . the scriptures (verse 27). A man filled with the Spirit dwells much with the scripture. Peter quoted scripture at the day of Pentecost, when he was full of the Holy Ghost. What is a man good for if he has no weapon? We don't know how to use this sword: we should get into the habit of using it. David says, "Thy word have I hid in my heart;" a good thing in a good place for a good purpose. If you lose your health you lie upon your bed, and feed upon the word of God. When you meet together to dine, it is better to bring out the Bible than to bring out wine. I was glad in England at seeing that done in a great many houses of the upper classes. — *Moody.*

II. They constrained him (verse 29). What think you of our need of the Lord Jesus? For my part, my soul is like a hungry and thirsty child, and I need his love and consolations for my refreshment; I am a wandering and lost sheep, and I need him as a good and faithful shepherd; my soul is like a frightened dove pursued by the hawk, and I need his wounds for a refuge; I am a feeble vine, and I need his cross to lay hold of, and wind myself about; I am a sinner, and I need his righteousness; I am naked and bare, and need his holiness and innocence for a covering; I am in trouble and alarm, and I need his solace; I am ignorant, and I need his teaching; simple and foolish, and I need the guidance of his Holy Spirit: in no situation, and at no time, can I do without him. — *Gott-hold's Emblems.*

III. They knew him (verse 31). One Christian asked another what he expected to do when he got to heaven; and he said he expected to take one good long look of about 500 years at Christ, and then he would want to see Paul and Peter and John and the rest of the disciples. Well, it seems to me, one glimpse of Christ will pay us for all that we are called upon to endure here, — to see the King in his beauty, to be in the presence of the King. — *Moody.*

IV. The hymn, "A little talk with Jesus."

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 14.) It is well for Christians to talk often with one another about Jesus.
2. (Verse 15.) Jesus ever comes to those who thus talk about him.
3. Those who desire to know the truth, Christ will guide into truth.
4. (Verse 16.) Our eyes are often holden from seeing Christ, because he appears in strange providences, and unexpected forms and places.
5. But in due time he always reveals himself to all who are willing to see.
6. (Verse 17.) Christianity is not the religion of the credulous. Only the compulsion of fact and reason made even the disciples believe.
7. (Verse 19.) "Go and tell Jesus" all that burdens your heart. There is great relief in telling to his ears our sorrows.
8. (Verse 25.) Unbelief blinds the eyes to the plainest truths.
9. (Verse 27.) The privilege and duty of getting help in understanding the Scriptures.
10. Blessed are those to whom the Bible is an opened book.
11. (Verse 28.) We must invite and welcome Christ, would we have him abide with us.
12. (Verse 30.) Christ reveals himself often in the daily duties and simplest acts of life.
13. (Verse 31.) He often specially reveals himself to us in the breaking of bread at his own supper.

LESSON XII. — DECEMBER 22, 1878.

THE SAVIOUR'S LAST WORDS. — LUKE 24: 44-53.

TIME. Verses 44-49 were probably spoken at least in part Monday evening, April 6, A.D. 30. The ascension, &c. (verses 50-53), Thursday, May 17, 40 days after the resurrection.

PLACE. Verses 44-49 were spoken at Jerusalem, according to Robinson. Alford (and he is probably correct) makes these verses a summary of what Jesus said during the 40 days. The ascension took place near Bethany.

RULERS. Tiberius Caesar, emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judaea; Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

THE CONNECTION.

After the revelation which Christ made to the two at Emmaus, they hastened back to Jerusalem to make this great event known to the apostles. They found the eleven, with some other disciples, assembled together, and as they entered, were greeted with the intelligence, "The Lord hath risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon!" They then rehearsed what had happened to themselves. The disciples were at their evening meal, and the two from Emmaus were still engaged in their relation, when Jesus himself came and stood in the midst of them, and gave the usual salutation, — "Peace be unto you." As the disciples had discredited most of the previous reports, so now they distrusted the evidence of their own sight, and supposed, in their alarm, that what they saw was a ghost. Jesus hastened to dispel their illusion. To convince them that it was himself, he invited them to touch him; he showed them the wounds in his hands and his feet; and for their further conviction, he asked for some food, and when they presented him with some broiled fish and honeycomb, he ate it before them. He then apprised them that their office in the service of his kingdom, so far from having ended, had now really begun; and, as a foretaste and earnest of the rich qualifying graces of the Spirit which awaited them, he breathed upon them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20: 23). — *Kittó*.

44 And he said unto them, These¹ are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all² things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the³ prophets, and in the psalms,⁴ concerning me.

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ⁵ to suffer, and to rise⁶ from the dead the third day:

¹ Matt. 16: 21. ² ch. 21: 22. Acts 3: 18; 13: 27, 33. ³ ver. 27. ⁴ Ps. 22: 110. ⁵ Isa. 53: 3, 5. Acts 4: 12. ⁶ 1 Pet. 1: 3.

EXPLANATORY.

44. These are the words, &c. Or, this is the fulfilment of what I before told you respecting my death (see Luke 18: 33. Mark 10: 33). — *Barnes*. Doubtless he had often said things to them on these matters, which have not been recorded for us. — *Alford*. While I was yet with you. Before my death. The law of Moses. The five books of Moses, called the Pentateuch. This was the first division of the Old Testament among the Jews, and was called the Law. When our Lord speaks of the things in the "law of Moses" concerning himself, there can be little doubt that he points to all the types and figures which were emblems of himself, and specially to the sacrifices. — *Ryle*. In the prophets. This was the second division, and included Joshua, Judges, the four books of Kings, and the prophets except Daniel. In the psalms. This was the third, and was called Hagiography, or holy writings. It contained the Psalms, and all the rest of the canonical books, — Daniel, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah being reckoned as one book, and the Chronicles closing the canon. — *Alford*. This division of the Old Testament was in use long before the time of Christ, and was what he referred to here; and he meant to say that in each of these divisions of the Old Testament there were prophecies respecting himself. The particular subject before them was his resurrection from the dead. A most striking prediction of this is contained in Ps. 16: 9-11: compare it with Acts 2: 24-32; 13: 35-37. — *Barnes*. Thus did Christ give his parting testimony to the divine authority of the Old Testament.

45. Then opened he their understanding, &c. "He did not open their understanding without the Scripture: he sends them thither. He knows that Scripture would not give them a sufficient knowledge of the things of God, without the influence and illumination of his Spirit. They are truly taught by God, who are taught by his Spirit to understand the Scriptures. Christ gives great honor to the Scriptures. The Devil cheats those whom he persuades to cast away the Scriptures in expectation of a teaching by the Spirit. The Spirit teaches by, not without, not contrary to, the Holy Scriptures." — *Poole*.

46. Thus it behooved. Was necessary and proper, — because it had been so written. It was the fulfilment of the Old Testament; and therefore he was the true Messiah, seeing he fulfilled the Scriptures.

47. Repentance and remission of sins (forgiveness). The substance of the preaching of the gospel literally corresponded to the description (see Acts 2: 38). "Repent and be baptized" were the words of the first sermon preached at Jerusalem. — *Alford*. This was the substance of our Lord's preaching. There is no remission of sins without repentance. In his name. All remission of sins

47 And that repentance and¹ remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 And ye are witnesses² of these things.

49 ¶ And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power³ from on high.

50 ¶ And he led them out as far

¹ Acts 5: 31; 13: 38. ² Acts 1: 8. ³ Isa. 44: 3. Joel 2: 28, &c. Acts 1: 8; 2: 1-21.

is for the sake of Christ, on his account. Among all nations. (1) This is the command of Christ. The church cannot be obedient, and let one nation be without the gospel. (2) Every nation needs the gospel as much as ours needs it. (3) It is the nature of a living Christianity to be missionary. Max Muller says that of all religions, only the missionary religions are living. That church is dead which is not anxious to preach the gospel to every creature. (4) This is the only way the church will keep pure. Nothing without this can keep the doctrine or life pure: organization, creeds, persecutions, all have failed. But any church which seeks to save souls will keep pure, because it cannot do its work without the great main doctrines of Christianity. (5) The true *broad church* cares for the world: the narrow church is the one that cares chiefly for itself. (6) The church at home is built up faster by its working for the heathen. (7) The grandeur of this work exalts the individual Christians who give and labor. (8) It is blessed to have part in the final triumph of the gospel.

Some may think the Sun of righteousness is slow in rising; but let those who believe the times are out of joint understand that they are doing dishonor to the Holy Ghost. Four-fifths of the human race now have the Bible in their own tongue. Religious toleration prevails in every civilized nation. The Roman Church may never grow out of her greed of power, but the day of her despotisms is over. Infidelity is no longer a masculine factor in human affairs, as it was, for instance, in the days when the Roman amphitheatre ran with the blood of the Christians. Bible study over the world is settling beyond disturbance the fundamental Christian truths. There never has been a time when the missionary spirit was more active than now. It is impossible to enumerate the occasions of special encouragement to missions. In short, as the old English preacher said, "The Lord has been coming ever since he went away." — *Rev. Dr. Withrow*. Beginning at Jerusalem. They were to begin at Jerusalem, but not to end there; neither were they to wait till all the people of that city had been converted, or even heard the gospel preached. They were only to begin there. We must begin in our churches, but that church has rung its own death-knell that would stay there.

48. Ye are witnesses of these things. The apostles were witnesses of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In this consisted their especial office and work. Others besides them had been companions of our Lord; but peculiar grace and power was given to them, by which they gave forth their testimony (Acts 4: 33). And what this testimony included, we learn from the conditions of apostleship propounded by Peter himself (Acts 1: 21, 22); that, in order to its being properly given, an apostle must have been an eye and ear witness of what had happened from the baptism of John until the ascension; i.e., during the whole official life of our Lord. And we are consequently justified in assuming that the substance of the teaching of the apostles consisted of their testimony to such facts, given in the Holy Ghost and with power. I believe, then, that the apostles, in virtue not merely of their having been eye and ear witnesses of the evangelic history, but especially of their office, gave to the various churches their testimony in a narrative of facts, such narrative being modified in each case by the individual mind of the apostle himself, and his sense of what was requisite for the particular community to which he was ministering. — *Alford*. The word "witnesses" afterwards meant "martys" (which is, in fact, the Greek word itself); for Christ's witnesses died to support their testimony. — *M. B. Riddle*.

49. I send the promise of my Father. The promise of the gift of another Comforter contained in Christ's last conversation with the eleven (John 14: 16-20, 26; 15: 26, 27; 16: 13, 14). This was the promise of the Father, made in the Old Testament (Isa. 44: 3. Ezek. 36: 27. Joel 2: 28-32), recalled to the remembrance of the nation by John the Baptist (Matt. 3: 11), and renewed by the Son. — *Abbott*. John's mission was accomplished in baptizing with water; so now the great end of his own mission, the baptism with the Holy Ghost, was on the point of being accomplished. It was the beginning of a new period of spiritual influence, totally unlike any which had preceded. See Acts 2: 17. — *Alford*. Tarry in Jerusalem. They tarried in worship and prayer till the day of Pentecost, ten days after this. Endued with power. Compare Luke 24: 49; Rom. 15: 13, 19; 1 Cor. 2: 4; 2 Cor. 12: 9; Phil. 3: 10; 1 Thess. 1: 5. These references will give the student an idea of the meaning of Christ's promise. It includes (1) the power of working miracles; (2) personal, moral, and spiritual

as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried¹ up into heaven.

52 And² they worshipped him,

and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

53 And were continually in the temple, praising³ and blessing God. Amen.

¹ Acts 1: 9. Heb. 4: 14. ² Matt. 28: 9, 17. ³ Acts 2: 46, 47; 5: 42.

power in the conflicts and temptations of life, and especially in bearing suffering and persecution for Christ's sake; (3) power in the ministry of the word beyond that which belongs to human eloquence and wisdom, or even to the mere natural adaptation of the truth to human wants. — *Abbott*.

50. Out as far as to Bethany. There is something very touching in the fact that our Lord's ascension took place close to Bethany. It was near Bethany, over the Mount of Olives as it descends to Bethany. This was a small village bordering on the Mount of Olives, where Mary and Martha and Lazarus dwelt. It is probable that they all were present when our Lord left the earth. It did not transpire in the darkness of the night. Jesus did not secretly take himself away. In the light of broad day, while their senses were bright and active, as they were conversing together, in the body that he had borne while on earth, bearing the marks of his suffering, before the fastened gaze of his disciples he began to ascend. They saw him rise until, in the region of the clouds, he was veiled from their eyes; or perhaps, as on the mount, a luminous cloud descended and enveloped him as he arose. — *Pierce*. For other accounts see Mark 16: 19; Acts 1: 9, 10. The ascension is intimated (1) by the Old Testament writers (Ps. 24: 7-10; 110: 1; 68: 18; with Eph. 4: 7, 8; Lev. 16: 15; with Heb. 9: 7-13); (2) by Christ (John 6: 62; 7: 33; 20: 17); (3) it is referred to by the apostles as a fact well recognized in the Christian Church (Eph. 1: 20; Heb. 10: 12; 1 Pet. 3: 22); (4) it is an almost necessary sequel of the resurrection, since after the resurrection Christ must either have ascended into heaven, or lived a hidden life and subsequently died a natural death. — *Abbott*. Lifted up his hands . . . blessed them. After the prophetic promise, there follows the high-priestly benediction, as it were, from the threshold of the heavenly sanctuary into which he is about to enter. — *Van Oosterzee*. This lifting up of the hands was not in order to put them on his disciples, nor was it used as a prayer-gesture, nor was the blessing of them prayerwise, or by praying for a blessing on them. As Aaron, his type, lifted up his hands towards the people of Israel, and blessed them when he first offered the offerings for them (Lev. 9: 22), so Christ, as the great High Priest, having offered himself as a sacrifice for the sins of his people, lifted up his hands towards them and blessed them in an authoritative way. — *Gill*.

51. He was parted from them. We may understand this of the commencing ascent, when he was first lifted from the ground where they were standing. — *Alford*. Carried up into heaven. In Acts it says, "a cloud received him out of their sight." There was a manifest propriety in the last withdrawal of the Lord while ascending, not consisting in a disappearance of his body as on former occasions since the resurrection; for thus might his abiding humanity be called in question. As it was, he went up past the visible boundary of heaven, — the cloud, — in *human form*; and so we think of and pray to him. — *Alford*. A cloud — probably a bright cloud (Matt. 17: 5) — passing beneath, received him. — *Lechler*. The cloud was, I believe, the shekinah of the Old Testament, — the symbol of the divine presence and glory. — *Abbott*. Between us and his visible presence, — between us and that glorified Redeemer who now sitteth at the right hand of God, — that cloud still rolls. But the eye of faith can pierce it; the incense of true prayer can rise above it; through it the dew of blessing can descend. And if he is gone away, yet he has given us in his Holy Spirit a nearer sense of his presence, a closer infolding in the arms of his tenderness, than we could have enjoyed even if we had lived with him of old in the home of Nazareth, or sailed with him in the little boat over the crystal waters of Gennesareth. We may be as near to him at all times — and more than all when we kneel down to pray — as the beloved disciple was when he laid his head upon His breast. The Word of God is very nigh us, even in our mouths and in our hearts. To all who will listen he still speaks. He promised to be with us always, even to the end of the world; and we have not found his promise fail. Forever, even until all the aeons have been closed, and the earth itself, with the heavens that now are, have passed away, shall every one of his true and faithful children find peace and hope and forgiveness in his name; and that name shall be called Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, "God with us." — *Farrar*. The Lord is indeed gone away, but in order to return again; and the whole heavenly life into which his ascension introduced him is only a great interval, comprehending centuries, between his first and his second appearance. — *Van Oosterzee*. The heavenly messengers bear

witness to a threefold truth: He *will* return; he will return *as the same*; he will return *in like manner* as he went (Acts 1: 10, 11). — *Lechler*.

52, 53. **Worshipped him.** This term cannot be understood of mere *civil respect*: it must mean *divine homage*, as he was not present. This shows that they regarded him as God (Exod. 20: 4-5). Here is the first act of worship to the *risen Saviour*; and the next verse shows that in this they continued, praising and blessing God for all they had learned of God in Christ, and worshipping in the temple with new joy, from their knowledge of the Lamb of God. They continued, as we learn (Acts 1: 14), also in prayer and supplication in an *upper room*; the whole assembly of disciples, including the mother of our Lord, being engaged in social worship, pleading the promise, and waiting for the *Holy Spirit* which the *risen Saviour* should send down (Acts 2: 33). — *Jacobus*. Great joy. The same fearful, distressed disciples who before his death could not be comforted (John 16: 6) now are full of joy.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. The late Duke of Wellington once met a young clergyman, who being aware of his Grace's former residence in the East, and of his familiarity with the ignorance and obstinacy of the Hindoos in support of their false religion, gravely proposed the following question: "Does not your Grace think it almost useless and extravagant to preach the gospel to the Hindoos?" The duke immediately rejoined, "That is not your business. Your business is to obey your marching orders, — '*Preach the gospel to every creature*.'"

II. There was a period in my ministry when most of my people were in a very desponding state of mind. The more I tried to comfort them, the more they complained of doubt and depression. I knew not what to do, or what to think. About this time our attention was directed to the claims of the perishing heathen in India. My people were aroused and interested. They set out with earnestness and zeal in the new path of Christian usefulness. They did what they could; and, while thus engaged, the lamentations ceased, the sad became cheerful, the desponding calm. *God blessed them when they tried to be a blessing.* — *Andrew Fuller*.

III. With the exception of the thirteenth century (*tenebrosus*, as the late Dr. Miller called it), the progress of the truth has been ever onward. From every defeat it has arisen afresh; and, what has never been the case in any other system, religious, social, or intellectual, has revived anew from the ashes of its own inward corruptions. In this nineteenth century, the Christian population of the world cannot be far from 300,000,000; and its progress now is more rapid than in any period since the apostolic age. What imagination can forecast the conquests of the next fifty years? The leaven is working in every land. The old empires of idolatry and superstition are effete and ready to vanish, while new Christian empires are born almost in a day. Every new discovery in nature or invention in art helps to spread the gospel. — *Dr. Hagen*.

IV. Mrs. Millicent Fawcett, the writer, and wife of Prof. Fawcett, M.P., says that in Dickens's novels feminine virtue is nearly always undersized, easily melted to tears, and more or less idiotic; and that Thackeray represented the best of women as subject to absurd jealousy. Dickens's "Mrs. Jellyby" has done a great deal of harm. Her eyes were always fixed on something far off, as if she saw Africa and Borrioboola Gha, while her children ran about neglected. That encouraged the mistake that a woman who had sufficient mental activity to be interested in philanthropy, literature, or politics, would not care also for her family. Common experience gave no support to this impression. — *Daily Advertiser*.

PRACTICAL.

1. (Verse 44.) God's promises are always fulfilled.
2. The Old Testament promises and foretells: the New fulfils.
3. (Verse 45.) Ever pray that God may open our understandings.
4. (Verse 47.) Repentance for man, and forgiveness from God in Christ's name, the central subject of our teaching and preaching.
5. Begin to preach the gospel at home, but do not end there.
6. It is the duty of all to see that the gospel is preached to every creature.
7. (Verse 48.) Christians are the witnesses of Christ: (1) by words, (2) by life.
8. (Verse 49.) We have power in the gospel only when we have received the promise of the Father, — the Holy Spirit.
9. (Verse 51.) Christ's going to heaven with his human body, a promise of our future life.
10. We love and trust a living Saviour not a dead one.
11. Treasure up carefully the last words of Jesus more than the dying words of our best friend.
12. (Verse 53.) Joy and praise the native element of the Christian life.

PROPER NAMES FOUND IN THE LESSONS.

WITH THEIR SIGNIFICATION.

Ā/rōn, mountaineer.
Āb/dōn, servile.
Ā-bēd'nē-gō, a servant of Nego.
Ā-bi'jah, the will of the Lord.
Ā-brā-hām, father of a multitude.
Ād'am, red; earthy man.
Ād-ō-ni'jah, Jehovah is my master.
Ā'gār, a stranger, or flight.
Ā'hāb, father's brother.
Ā-hās-ū-ē'rūs, prince, lion-king.
Ā'hāz, possessor.
Āhā-zī'ah, whom Jehovah sustains.
Ā-hi'kām, a brother who raises up.
Ām-ā-zī'ah, the strength of the Lord.
Ām'mōn, sons of renown.
Ām'mōnite, strong people, or son of my kindred.
Ā'mōs, a burden.
Ā'mōn, bulldier.
Ā'mōz, strong, robust.
Ān'nās, gracious, merciful.
Ān'ā-thōth, answers to prayer.
Ān'drew, manly.
Ārā'bia, wild and desert.
Ā'sā, physician.
Ās'ā-hēl, work or creature of God.
Ās-ā-i'ah, the Lord hath wrought.
Ā'sāph, who assembles the people.
Āsh'tā-rōth, a star.
Ās-syr'i-ā, a step.
Āthāl'i'ah, whom Jehovah afflicts.
Āz-ā-li'ah.
Āz-ā-ri'ah, whom the Lord helps.
Āzē'kāh, dug over.

Bā'al, lord, master.
Bā'a-līm, lords, masters.
Bā'a-shā, he that seeks, or lays waste.
Bāb'y-lōn, confusion, or mixture.
Bā'rāk, lightning.
Bār'nā-bās, son of exhortation, or comfort.
Bār-ti-mē'us, son of Timal.
Bā'rūch, who is blessed.
Bē-ēr'shē-bā, the well of an oath, or of seven.
Bēl-shāz'zār, prince of Bel.
Bēl-tē-shāz'zār, whom Bel favors.

Bēn-ā'i'ah, built or made by the Lord.
Bēn-hā'dād, son of Hadad, or of noise.
Bēn-hā'il.
Bēn'jā-mīn, son of the right hand.
Bē-rā'chāh, blessing.
Bēth-āb'ā-rā, house of the passage, or ford.
Bēth'ā-nū, house of dates, or affliction.
Bēth'ēl, the house of God.
Bēth'lē-hēm, the house of bread.
Bēth-sā'i-dā, the house of fish.
Bēth-shē'mēsh, house of the sun.

Cā'l-i-ā-phās, depression.
Cāl'vār-y, a skull.
Cā'nāan, merchant; low, or bowed down.
Cā'nāan-ites, lowlanders.
Cā-pēr'nā-tim, the village of Nahum.
Cār'chē-mīsh, fort of Chemosh.
Chāl-dē'an, a native of Chaldea.
Chō-rā'zīm, the secret, or here is a mystery.
Christ, anointed.
Clē'ō-pās, of a renowned father.
Cōr'inth, a city of Greece.
Cūsh'im, Ethiopian, or black.
Cy'rūs, the sun.

Dā-mās'cus, activity.
Dān'i'el, judgment of God.
Dā-rī'ūs, possessor, lord.
Dā'vid, well-beloved, dear.
Dēb'ō-rāh, a bee.
Dō'thān, two wells.
Dū'rā, a circle or dwelling.

E-bēd'mē-lēch, king's servant, or minister.
E'dōm, red, earthy, or of blood.
E'dōm-ite.
E'gypt, land of the Copts.
E-le-i'kim, raised up by God.
E-lī'jah, my God is Jehovah.
E-lī'shā, God his salvation.
E-līsh'ā-māh, God hearing.
E-līz'a-bēth, the oath of God.
Em-mā'ūs, warm baths.
En'dōr, fountain of Dor or of the house.
Eph'rāim, fruitful, or twin land.
E-sār-hād'dōn, gift of fire, or victor.

SCRIPTURE PROPER NAMES.

E/sáu, hairy, rough.
Es/thér, star of fortune.
E-thi-ó/pián, a native of Ethiopia.
Eú-phrá/tés, good and abounding river.
E/vil-mér/ó-dách, the fool of Merodach.
E-zè/kiél, the strength of God.
Ez'ra, help.

Gá'bri-él, God is my strength.
 Gád, fortune, or a troop.
 Gál-i-lée, a circle.
 Gá-má/i-él, recompense of God.
 Gá/zá, strong, fortified.
 Gén-nés/á-rét, garden of the prince.
 Ger'i-zim, cutter.
 Géth-sém/á-né, oil press.
 Gid/é-ón, he that cuts down.
 Gi'hón, a gushing stream.
 Gil/é-ad, a hard, rocky region.
 Gil/gál, wheel, revolution.
 Gó-li'áth, an exile.

Háb/ák-kúk, an embrace.
 Há-dó/rám, Hadar is exalted.
 Há/mán, magnificent.
 Há/máth, fortress.
 Há-mú/tál, relative of the dew.
 Há-ná'ni, gift of the Lord.
 Hán-á-ni'áh, gift of the Lord.
 Hás/ráh.
 Ház/á-él, whom God sees.
 Hé'brews, the descendants of Heber.
 Hér/ód, hero-like.
 Hé-ró/di-ás, the wife of Herod.
 Héz-é-ki'áh, Jehovah strengthens.
 Hín'nóm, gracious, or abundant.
 Hó-sé/á, savior or deliverance.
 Hó-shé'a, savior or deliverance.
 Húl/dáh, a weasel.

Íd/dó, timely, loving, or a mishap.
 Ísáac, laughter.
 Í-sá'iah, the salvation of the Lord.
 Ísh'má-él, heard by God.
 Ís'rá-él, soldier of God.

Já'cób, supplanter.
 Já-há/zé-él.
 Jámes, the same with Jacob.
 Jé-hó/á-ház, whom the Lord sustains.
 Jé-hó/áh, given by the Lord.
 Jé-hó/á-chín, preparation, or strength of the Lord.
 Jé-hó/i'á-dá, Jehovah knows.
 Jé-hó/i'á-kim, Jehovah has raised.
 Jé-hón/á-thán.
 Jé-hó/rám, exaltation of the Lord.
 Jé-hósh/á-phát, God judges.
 Jé-hó/váh, I am.
 Jé'hú, the living, Jehovah is He.
 Jé-i'él, God takes away.
 Jér-é-mi'áh, the Lord throws down.
 Jér'i-chó, place of fragrance.

Jér-ó-bó'am, whose people are many.
 Jér'u-él, founded by God.
 Jé-rú/sá-lér, possession, or vision of peace.
 Jé'sús, saviour.
 Jew, a man of Judah.
 Jéz/é-bél, untouched, chaste.
 Jó/áh, brother of the Lord.
 Jó/á-ház.
 Jó/áh, to whom God hastens.
 Jó/él, Jehovah is his God.
 John, the grace or gift of the Lord.
 Jó/náh, a dove.
 Jón/á-dáb, who acts in good earnest.
 Jóp/pá, beauty, or comeliness.
 Jór/dán, the descender.
 Jó'seph, increase, or remover.
 Jósh/ú-á, Jehovah his help, or the savior.
 Jó-si'áh, whom Jehovah heals.
 Jó/thám, the Lord is upright.
 Jū/dáh, praised, celebrated.
 Jū-dé'á, land of the Jews.

Kén'ite, a smith.
 Kíd'rón, obscure, turbid.
 Kó'háth-ites, the posterity of Kohath.
 Kór'hites.

Lá/chísh, impregnable, or smitten.
 Lá/z/á-rús, assistance of God.
 Léb/á-nón, white.
 Lé'vi, twined, associated.
 Lé'vites, of the tribe of Levi.
 Lú'b/náh, whiteness, transparency.
 Lú'bím, of a thirsty land, Libyans.
 Lúke, luminous.

Má/á-cháh, oppression.
 Má-á-sé'iah, work of the Lord.
 Mác-é-dó'ni-á, land of Macedo.
 Mág/dá-lá, a tower.
 Mág-dá-lé'né, of Magdala.
 Má-nás/séh, that causes forgetfulness.
 Mār/é-sháh, at the head.
 Mār'k, shining.
 Mār'tha, a lady.
 Mā'ry, exalted.
 Mát'tán, a gift.
 Mát-tá-ni'áh, gift of Jehovah.
 Mát'thew, given by Jehovah.
 Médes, people of Media.
 Mēl/i-tá, affording honey.
 Mēl/zár, steward, or butler.
 Mēn/á-hēm, comforter.
 Mē'né, counted.
 Mē'shá, safety, or a recess.
 Mē'shéh, a drawing out.
 Mēs-ó-pó-tá'míá, between two rivers.
 Mēs-si'áh, anointed.
 Mí-cá'iah, who is like to God.
 Mí'l'ó, fullness.
 Mísh/á-él, who is what God is.
 Míth/ré-dáth, given by or to Mithra.
 Mó/áb, of his father.

SCRIPTURE PROPER NAMES.

Mô'ab-ite, the posterity of Moab.
Mô'êsch, king.
Môr'dê cāl, little man, or servant of Mero-
dach.
Mô'ses, taken out of the water.

Nā'ā-māh, sweet, pleasantness.
Nā'ā-mān, sweet, pleasantness.
Nā'hūm, comfort.
Nā'in, beauty, or grass-plot.
Nāph'tā-li, my wrestling.
Nāz'ā-rēth, a shoot, or scion.
Nēb-ti-chād-nēz/zar, Nebo, protector from
misfortune.
Nēb-ti-zār'ā-dān, chief whom Nebo favors.
Nē-hē-mi'āh, consolation of the Lord.
Nē-thān'ē-ēl, the gift of God.
Nēth-ā-ni'āh, the gift of the Lord.
Nī-cop'ō-lis, the city of victory.
Nin'ē-vēh, abode of Ninus.
Nī'sān, of flowers, or new day.
Nis'rōch, the great eagle, or a board of
Noah.

Ō-bā-dī'ah, servant of the Lord.
Ō'ded, restoring, lifting up.
Ōl'i-vēt, abounding in olives.
Ō'phēl, elevated place, hill.

Pāl-ēs'tine, land of strangers.
Pāul, small, little.
Pēkāh, open-eyed, or oversight.
Pēk-ā-hi'āh, the Lord opened his eyes.
Pēn'tē-cōst, the fiftieth day.
Pē'tēr, a rock, or stone.
Phā'raōh, the sun, or the king.
Phā'raōh Hōph'rā.
Phā'raōh Nē'chō.
Phār't-sēe, separated.
Phīl'ip, a lover of horses.
Phī-lis'tiā, wandering, migration.
Phī-lis-tines, those that dwell in villages.
Pī'lāte, armed with a dart.

Rāb-shā'kēh, cup-bearer of the king.
Rē'chāb, a horseman.
Rē'chāb-ites, the posterity of Rechab.
Rē-hō-bō'am, enlarger of the people.
Rē-zī'ā.
Rīb'lāh, fertility.
Rōme, strength, power.

Sād'dū-cēes, followers of Zadoc, or of
righteousness.
Sā-lō'mē, peaceful.
Sā-mā'riā, the city of Shemer, or a watch-
post.
Sān-hē'drim, assembly, council.
Sār'dis, the sun.
Sā-rēp'tā, goldsmith's shop, or smelting
house.

Sā'tān, adversary.
Sāul, asked for.
Sē'tr, hairy, rugged.
Sē-leū'ctis.
Sēn-nāch'ē-rīb, Sin (or the moon) adds
brothers.
Sēr-ā-i'āh, warrior of the Lord.
Shā'drāch, circuit of the sun, or royal one.
Shāl'lūm, retribution.
Shāl-mā-nē'ser, fire-worshipper.
Shā'phān, the coney.
Shēm-ā-i'āh, whom the Lord has heard.
Shē-mir'ā-mōth, name most high, or
heaven most high.
Shēsh-bāz/zār, fire-worshipper.
Shi'shāk (Sheshenk I., king of Egypt).
Si-dōn, fishing, fish town.
Sim'ē-ōn, that hears, listening.
Si'mōn, that hears, listening.
Si'nāl, jagged, or thornbush.
Sōd'ōm, burning, vineyard, or fortified.
Sōl'ō-mon, peaceable.
Sūk'ki-lmā, booth-men.
Syr'ia, Tyre-land, or Shur.

Tā'bōr, the height.
Tāh'pān-hēs.
Tē'bēth (the tenth month), winter.
Tē'kēl, weight.
Thōm-ās, a twin.
Ti-bē'r-i-ās, city of Tiberius.
Tig'lāth-pilē'sēr, miraculous.
Tik'vāth.
Tītūs, honorable.
Tōb-ād-ō-ni'jāh, good is Adonijah.
Tō-bi'jāh, goodness of Jehovah.
Tō'phēt, tabret grove, or spitting.
Tyre, a rock.

Ū-ri'jāh, the Lord is my light.
Ū'zāl, going forth.
Ūz-zī'āh, strength of Jehovah.

Zāc-chē'ūs, pure, just.
Zāch-ā-ri'āh, remembered by Jehovah.
Zār-ē-phāth, smelting house.
Zēb-ā-dī'ah, gift of the Lord.
Zēb'ē-dēe, Jehovah's gift.
Zēb't-lūn, a habitation.
Zēch-ā-ri'āh, Jehovah remembered.
Zēd-ē-ki'āh, the justice of the Lord.
Zēm-ā-rā'im, double forest.
Zēph-ā-ni'āh, whom God has concealed.
Zēph'ā-thāh.
Zē'rāh, a rising.
Zē-rūb'bā-bēl, scattered at Babylon.
Zib't-āh, a roe.
Zim'ri, sung, celebrated.
Zi'ōn, a sunny mount.
Ziz, flower, brightness.



